



ALL
ROUND
SPORT





JOHN A. SEAVERNS

DEY

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ALL ROUND SPORT.

ALL ROUND SPORT WITH FISH, FUR, AND FEATHER

ADVENTURES ON THE TURF AND THE ROAD, IN
THE HUNTING AND CRICKET FIELDS, YACHTING
COURSES, LINKS, AND CURLING PONDS

BY T. DYKES ("ROCKWOOD")

TWENTY-FOUR HIGHLY-FINISHED TINTED FULL-PAGE SKETCHES, AND THIRTY-
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THE EARL OF ROSEBERY,

WHO TAKES A KEEN INTEREST IN ALL

HEALTH-GIVING PASTIMES AND SPORTS.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.



HIS volume consists chiefly of a series of stories, sketches, and songs, descriptive of rambles with the rod, gun, and golf-stick—of happy days spent on board racing yachts and deep-sea fishing-boats, with amusing and instructive experiences in the field and on the course. Some have already seen the light in various journals, principally *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, *Glasgow Herald*, *Society*, and *County Gentleman*, to whose Proprietors the Author begs to express his thanks for their permission to republish the same.

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The Admiral amongst
the Tailors.

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ALL ROUND SPORT.

THE BIG FOX OF BALDERSWOOD ;

OR,

A CURE FOR HUNTING BAGGED-FOXES.

“OU ask me what that there is with the little bit of silver at the end of it,” said old Tom Gorseknot, of the Middlevale. “Well, as Master says when he calls here sometimes and has a pipe over a talk about the ’ounds, ‘thereby ’angs a tail.’”

“Yes, but it doesn’t seem like the tag of a fox.”

“Well, no ; and yet it is, somehow. But, if you’re not in a hurry, I’ll tell you this story—it’s a rum one, as you’ll say when you hear it. If you have time to listen now I’m ready, for I’m waitin’ till young Tom comes home.”

“Nothing would delight me more, I am sure,” was the reply, “for if there’s one thing I like more than another it is a story from a huntsman’s own lips, as it is free from exaggeration and affectation, and there is a humour about it which savours of the hunting-field, while the subject is handled like a fox.”

“Well ! well ! just draw in your chair and have a pipe and some of our home-brewed, and I’ll tell you all about the big fox of Balderswood.”

With a mug of home-brewed such as would make a Burtonian blush, and a nice-drawing “churchwarden,” I soon felt at home while old Tom commenced to “break covert,” as he called it. This he did in his own way.

“You’ll maybe not think it, sir—but its forty-five year, this ’ere month of October, since I drove a young shorthorn bull up to old Squire Sykes’, who hunted the Brumvale. A good old-fashioned old sort was the Squire, though he was a better judge of cattle than of hounds. It was a well-bred bull from Ware—where my father was a herdsman, and I’m thankful for it, for if it hadn’t been for that bull I might ha’ been all my life

on foot and never known what it was to be on a horse's back except when coming from the plough. However, that's neither here nor there. 'Can you ride?' says the Squire. 'No, but I'll try,' says I. 'Can you holler?' sez he. 'Can't I!' says I, and I gave him a view-holler as made the very woods ring. 'Can you brush yer own boots?' sez he. 'I never had none,' sez I, 'but I've brushed father's old ones as I've on,' sez I. 'Ye're a comical lad,' sez he, 'and I want a Whip, so you can have the job if ye mind, only you must not be afraid of yer neck,' sez he. Well, to make a long short of it, I was made Whip, and was with him for three years, when he guv up the country. I had some shifting luck for a time, and was in Wales, Leicestershire, and to Ireland and back twice; and then one day I was hangin' about Tattersall's—I sees a young fellow I used to know when with Squire Sykes.

"'Where are you now, Gorseknot?' sez he, 'I've lost sight of you.'

"'I'll soon be losing sight of myself,' sez I, 'so you need not be surprised.'

"'What d'ye mean?' sez he.

"'Well, I've been out of a job for a full season, and if I have another I may sell my clothes, for they won't fit me: idleness don't reduce the appetite, but its mighty sore on the victuals.'

"'Well,' he says, 'I'm glad I met you, for I've a letter from an old friend, in the north country, who wants a huntsman, and you are just the very man. It's not a nice country and the subscribers are a rum lot, but I daresay you'll do with them.'

"So, while I was almost jumping out of boots with joy, he went into the office and gave me a letter to Sir Percy Fitz-Cogget in Berkeley Square, and off I went to see about the job. Well, you knew Sir Percy—Heaven rest his soul!—but he was as straight-necked a one as ever ran. Well, of course he cross-questioned me a little, and walked up and down the room swearing awful for he had been at sea, and everything swears at sea, even to a parrot. He called the Rabbledale men the biggest set of craners ever you heard:—'All weavers, Gorseknot, mind, or tailors, or grocers—mind, I warn you, you never saw such a counter-mounted set of cowards in your life. But you'll just have to get used to them.'—Well, sir, I takes the crib and off I sets; I wasn't married then, and my luggage didn't need no special van

as our Tom and some o' the young ones would want nowadays for their neckties alone. Well, you never see such a place as Rabblesdale. The kennels were awful-like places, and the old sailor had got them all arranged into quarter-decks and 'tween, decks and poops and forecastles and the like. And the hounds—oh, my lor! I only saw sich once afore, and that was when I had deliriums from a heavy fall in Ireland, and had dog dreams as had no actual existence, only I recollects huntin' 'em all as if they was real. Well, the kennel-man was a caution. He was an old ship's cook as had been with Sir Percy, and had about the rummest ideas on management ever you see. However, I soon cleared him out, and, having got hold of Jim Waghorn from Culver Vale, I had things pretty tidy by the commencement of the regular season. One of the great difficulties was Sir Percy's lingo, and I couldn't make it out. For instance, he yelled at Jim to go the starboard side of a hedge once, and Jim going away down the left side had him a-sweering before the whole field.

“‘ You infernal lubber!’ says he, ‘where did you learn your business that ye don't know the starboard side of a hedge?’

“ Well, I think that it was this kind of ridiculous state of things as made the Rabbledale men take liberties. Had he spoken less he would have been paid more attention to, but he was always at it. So they put it down to what they called his eccentricities, and paid no heed—all of which was a bit rough on me.

“ Well, of course, as you say, few huntsmen would have stood that sort of thing; but, if you've known what it is to be dead-thrown, you can put up with a lot before losing a job. It's all very well readin' Lord Hardhead has thrown up the Suffolk and all that, but he's provided for. What one man may do for a huff, another man twice as disappointed could not do for a heavenful o' pleasure. However, it did come about, you see. Well, I know I'm not much of a story-teller. Lor' knows how men write descriptions o' runs with hounds nowadays in the papers, but they do it wonderful considerin' as I never see them except at the covert-side of a mornin', so I must have my own way. Well, these Rabbledale men had the most conceited way o' interferin' ever you saw, and there was no governin' o' them. One day I recollects Sir Percy gallopin' up, and, says he:

'You——ah, well, I won't say what!—son of a gun!' he said, 'don't you see you're ridin' over sown grass?' says he. 'Sown grass!' says he again, 'sown grass! you infernal idiot!'

"'Hand-sewn or machine-stitched?' says the man. 'I don't care a sixpence! You ride up the seams'—he was ridin' the furrows—'and you don't do much damage nohow.'

"Well, this was rough; but, worst of all, we were coming home from a blank day, and we comes across six o' them jumpin' in and out of fields, and smashing fences, and they had just got about one whole hurdle left over a sheepfold, where the sheep was eatin' off turnips. Well, up went Sir Percy, and how he did go for them! 'You —— tailors!' says he, 'is this the way you smash a good man's fences, you Jumping-Jack, sixpence-a-yard ribbon-measurers! what do you mean? Get out of this—the lot of you, or I'll take my whip across you!'

"'Well,' says the fellow, 'I've paid my two guineas, that's forty-two shillings,' says he, 'and it was to be sixpence a jump, run or no run, and I'm hanged if I don't have my eighty-four, so here goes!' and off went the top bar of another hurdle. Well, the old man wanted me off to fight the lot, and I had half a mind to, but it was better not. However, things did come to a point, as I've got for to show you. These fellows were some of them wonderfully clever, and could give you fifteen hundred reasons for losing foxes, but never a reason for not finding one. Well, one day, one of these nice Spring days, the ground all a-steaming in places, we gets well away with a grand old dog-fox. I viewed him away myself, and knew him, and I daresay he knew me—at least by my voice. Well, we goes straight slap over everything for four miles, and then, all at once, after hounds going breast-high, they throws up their noses. Well, I was just a-thinkin' what to do, when a fellow—I believe he was what they calls a drysalter, that's something in the chemists' and druggists' way—he came up, and says he:

"'You've under-ridden the scent, Gorseknot.'

"'I've what?' says I.

"'Under-ridden the scent,' says he.

"'You meant *overran* it,' says I.

"'Not at all,' says he, 'scent rises from the ground—sometimes it is an inch from it, sometimes a foot, sometimes a yard, as

when they're running breast-high, sometimes a couple o' yards.'

" 'Then how high may it be now?' says I, 'for there's not a moment to lose.'

" 'It's just the height of my nose,' says he, with a sniff like an old hound.

" Well, I did not know what to do, as I saw no way o' gettin' up to it, when up comes Sir Percy, and he starts to him the same way. Well, if ever you hear the language that he let out—well, all I say is, have your ears stuffed with cotton. 'So *you* are here!' he says, 'and you haven't brought your old balloon to go huntin' ten feet from the ground. You old salt-fish, dried up, chemical old humbug! don't you know that the hounds have been waitin' to hunt the heel scent ever since they started, all on account o' your carbonified old carcase? Get out o' this, or, by the piper who played afore Moses, I'll break you up, I will, as their lawful property!'

" Well, old Dickson, the drysalter, was a very influential party with the Hunt people, and the result was a meeting, and the result o' that meetin' was that the country people backed Sir Percy up in refusing to hunt the hounds, which I, however, agreed to do for them, so long as they backed me, for I had a wholesome dread of getting out of a job. Well, the country people went away over to a neighbouring county where they told all sorts of stories about us; and no wonder!—and, indeed, to tell you the truth, we were a regular laughing-stock pack. They were all in league together, and such men as to give advice you never heard, and all just like old Dickson, the drysalter, great on scent. You would actually have thought, you would, that a fox carried a smelling-bottle and dabbed a lot of it down every here and there for the hounds to pick up. Then, of course, the foxes gets scarce, for the gamekeepers were against us, and the farmers not with us, and things got worse and worse every day, me sticking to my post for sake of my bread and butter. At last, one old fellow, on his deathbed, he leaves a legacy of five hundred pounds to the Covert Fund. Well, that would have improved matters, you think; but it didn't. No sooner was that announced in the newspapers, than claims for damages came in from the farmers on all hands. You'd barely believe it, sir, but, though we had been unable to find a fox for a week, accounts came in for fifty pounds for lost chickens, ducks,

geese—ay, and no end o' number o' lambs. 'It must have been dogs,' I said to one fellow who claimed for a score o' lambs, and, the cunning fellow, d'ye know what he wrote back? He wrote back, he did, that it was possible I was right, as he hadn't got a good view of 'em in the dark, and he would shoot some just to see. Then there was a Mrs. Grab, a widow, she had an account against me every week—always came, she did, regularly crying, but never brought one o' the dead fowls. The cruel monster had worried them all, she said, down to the old gander. And, curious, it was always a certain big fox of Balderswood, one of our last coverts in the old times, that was always blamed. Yet we could never find him, let alone run him, and I was getting chaffed no end about it—for the country papers had taken the yarn up, and every other day had remarks in about the poultry-depredations. At last, one day, the *Rabbedale Gazette* had in a long account of the capture of the Balderswood fox in a hen-roost, and that there was to be a famous run with him. Who put it in I had no knowledge of, and paid no attention to it. I was dead sick of the business. Well, we met next day, a Saturday, at Coffintree, and you never see such a turn-out—a full field of five hundred—everybody from the Mayor on his mare, to the butcher's boy on a moke; and—would you believe it too?—but, on wheels everyone of them and keeping at a respectable distance, were the country folks. Hang me! I might have guessed something from a look at their faces, but I didn't. 'Got a fox at last, Tom,' says one. 'You've the big one from Balderswood safe now,' says another—and sure there was a lump of a yokel in the middle of a field with a bag.

"'Give us all a fair chance, Gorseknot,' said some of the youngsters, as I kept the hounds back and told the man to drop him out. Well, and he did, and you never hear such a laugh from the country folks! It was nothing—but here our artist has drawn the picture.

"Picture of the thirsting division pressing forward. The county families in carriages laughing like to split; some of the young ones holloing, and a yokel standing with an empty sack over a big black Tom Cat, with its back up at the nearest hounds.

"I left that night and took the cat's tail as a memento," said Tom, laughing, as I rose to bid him good-bye.

TAKING A MOOR.



IN taking a moor and making the necessary preparations for sport, it is well for one to be careful, for Highland grouse-lairds have a little bit of the old Highland cateran left in them, and do not disdain to rob the Sassenach any more indeed than they would to swallow a drop of good Scotch whiskey. Everyone who has read Mr. Jean's capital little book, "The Tommiebeg Shootings," must recollect well how the advertisement was so temptingly worded ; how "fishing was to be had," and all that, and how it turned out that the only true thing carried out in the compact was the lifting of the rent. Things have changed in the Highlands somewhat since then ; grouse-shooting has become more fashionable, and rents have risen, but Tommiebeg is still in the market. The auld laird may have "deid," and the auld factor may have "jist slippit awa the auld body-man," but they have left able successors, who will guarantee anything in the way of sport, be it shooting or fishing, and let the unfortunate lessee find out that he has been let in to a considerable tune for the privilege of looking at the skeletons of dead birds on a bleak piece of heather all day ; to lie in a damp, half-slated old lodge or castle—they are great in castles in the Highlands—all night, disturbed by the numerous bogles which are rent-free inmates of such places, if Dugald and Donald are at all to be believed. In the Tommiebeg it was customary, however, for the laird or his Edinburgh agent or factor to manage the grouse-letting ; now it has been mostly placed in the hands of London agents, who make, indeed, the letting of grouse-farms and salmon-fishings the sole business of their lives. The advantage so far has not been so much in favour of the sportsman as of the laird, the keen competition on the actual spot, not the heather, having roused an all-round rise in rents. Twenty years ago one could have got plenty of grouse to kill at a shilling a brace ; ten years ago the price rose to about half-a-guinea ; and this year there seems to be plenty of sportsmen and non-sportsmen who take a moor because it is the thing, quite willing to go over a guinea, a price at which, it is needless to

state, the sport is very dear if you leave out the grand caller Highland air and the exercise. The first questions possibly the grouse-agent will ask the intending sportsman will be—"How many guns are of the party? Do you want a lodge? Will there be ladies of the party?" And so on. All this information he can readily furnish, as, on forms which he has supplied to the factors or lairds, has been returned everything which should be true about the shooting, but which in many cases is the "Scotch mile and a bittock" off the line of accuracy. It is therefore necessary that some inquiry should be made as to who shot over it the previous season, and why he does not care to go in for it this year. Possibly he may be wishing for a change, or has become "gun shy," it having been his first experience; but it is just as likely to be the case that he found the birds few and far between, the "lovely situation in a charming valley" barely up to his idea of the picturesque, and "The Cawstle" in a somewhat dilapidated condition. Possibly he was a good shot, and over-killed the number allowed by careful work and hard walking, and possibly he was that worst of all grouse-tenants, a wholesale game dealer, who paid the rent with a cheque on the Leadenhall-street branch of the London and Westminster Bank. If so, he knew that he was not likely to have as many birds as formerly, and so shifted to fresh pastures or, rather, better stocked heather, leaving the fresh tenant to gather particulars about the style in which the place had been "scutched," to use a Scotch agricultural expression, for purging the land, during the last years of the lease. The best thing one can do who is anxious to have good sport for himself and his friends, and not a mere home in the Highlands, is to find out the name of some game-keeper in the neighbourhood, not too near, and to send him over it as soon as he can with a brace of dogs and report as to the likelihood of sport, the lay of the ground, if a hill-moor, if the walking is heavy (stout men and elderly men should always learn this in good time), and what sort of bags are likely to be made in the first fortnight over dogs, as it may fairly well be presumed that if birds are strong on the wing on the Twelfth they will be somewhat wild by the 24th. If the ground is not very suitable for driving, then keen shots, who like this form of the sport better than that behind dogs or walking up, will like to know, as if the drives are uncertain big bags will not very

easily be made at the end of the season, and there will be many days of disappointment quite as enjoyable in other ways as blank days in the hunting-field. This, an able and trustworthy gamekeeper would be ready to furnish for a pound or two, and no one who means to spend a hundred or two should grudge that for the information furnished. There should, however, be no delay about it, as Jones or Robinson, of the Stock Exchange, will jump in as he would into a speculation in shares, and take his chance of sport, grouse-shooting not being to either such an object as wearing a kilt and sporting a sporran. These, indeed, are the men who have made Highland sport dear, and placed it quite out of the reach of the old class, who might be classed as "single dog" men. The lodge, of course, should be carefully looked to, and the roof and walls carefully examined, as snow-storms in the North are long and severe, while mountain-torrents do not at times stick to their courses, and have little regard for doors or windows. Damp walls, be it remembered, are difficult to dry where only peat fuel can be had, and no one likes to be in a damp house on a wet day who has ever had a twinge of rheumatism. But the thing most neglected in taking grouse moors is the sanitation, and lodges are taken which a sanitary inspector in four out of five cases would condemn. The drains in many places lead into dangerous cesspools not far from the windows, where sewage-gas is generated, and the seeds of fever sown, to be carried back to the town houses, there to work havoc and have the town drains blamed for it; for, of course, "the Highlands are so healthy it could not be the Highlands, you know." The drainage of the lodge, the supply of water, and, equally important, the supply of fuel should be amongst the first things looked to. As regards the latter, it is as well to have it guaranteed. A noted southern sportsman, a well-known M.F.H., told me that his first work on the morning of the Twelfth at a lodge in Invernessshire once was the gathering of drift-wood at the riverside to raise a fire for the cooking of his breakfast; and I have had somewhat similar experiences. After the moor has been taken, if the keeper, as is mostly the case nowadays, is not let with it, it will be well to see as to getting hold of a good one; not a big, heavy, hulking fellow, who can merely carry a bag, but a smart, intelligent man, who can feed and manage his dogs well, and take a delight in

seeing them working in the field. He should always be knacky in boxing game, in which there is a great art, though the best I ever saw at that was not a gamekeeper at all.

"Who or what is he?" I asked my host, a northern merchant, who was standing superintending the operations on the evening of the Twelfth; "he does not know much about game, but seems handy with the hammer and that."

"He's one of my packing-box makers," was the reply. "He's not very strong, poor fellow, but he can carry a light bag on the hill, and is capital at this, while the fresh air seems to brace him up for the winter."

The arrangement was as good as it was kindly, and no doubt many a poor carpenter would be glad to try a fortnight carrying a bag on the heather, and relieving the keeper of the evening's work of packing boxes of game. Still, the good gamekeeper should be able to do this, and many other things besides, such as looking after the waterpipes, keeping the lawn-tennis ground in order, mending the loch-coble, splicing a fishing-rod, or dressing a fly, in addition to the other work required of him. Such a man if civil and courteous, with a kindly word to every shepherd, is invaluable, and, it is needless to state, is not every day to be had. The proximity of a place of worship will be inquired for by many and the distance of the lodge from the railway-station, the doctor's house, &c., will all be asked for, as well as numerous little bits of information which I need not here enumerate. Many people arrange to have goods or medicines sent from the large cities, and the time taken between the lodge and warehouse by post or rail should be known. Cartridges have frequently to be telegraphed for, and, as only a certain number are allowed under the Explosives Act to be sent by passenger-train, this always should be kept in mind; while a supply of powder, shot, and empty shells should always be at hand if required. By studying a few of these things beforehand, the sportsman may avoid many disappointments on The Twelfth and following days.

UNDER THE CROWN AND ANCHOR.

A NORTHERN YACHT RACING REMINISCENCE.

“ND what sort of wind are we going to have, or are we going to have any at all?” asked our brown-bearded bronze-faced skipper, as he held water with his oars in the little dingy which belonged to our craft, of a hard weather-beaten Loch Fyne herring fisher, who, with his hands in pockets and pipe in mouth, looked complacently down on him from the stone pier at Campbeltown, that town ever dear to lovers of Scotch whisky from the number of its distilleries; and well known as the capital of Kintyre, the southern portion of the dominions of the MacCallummore.

“Ay, ay! it iss wind you will heff, and no mistake. It hass been making up ferra hard for a breeze all night, and you’ll find it come away hard from the nor-west. Ay, as hard as you would wish whateffer before the night. The glass is comin’ down shust a little, and the wind hass been backin’ too, and maybe you would be as wise as your neebors as you would start with a reef down in your mainsail.”

The reply to the latter caution was a loud “Ha, ha!” in a deep bass voice, for our captain was by no means afraid of getting too much wind, his anxiety was, indeed, all the other way; he was afraid of getting light airs or none at all, and there is nothing a genuine lover of yacht racing dreads more than a drifting match or a dead calm.

Old Duncan’s assurance that there would be plenty of wind before the day was over was all that he wanted. He had known the old Lochgilphead man for many a day, and knew that there was not a better judge of the weather inside or outside the whole Kintyre Peninsula. As to reefing, there was plenty of time for that when the wind did come, and at the time the old man hailed him there was scarcely enough to carry the smoke of the galley fires clear of the stove pipes on the numerous yachts which comprised the fleet of the Royal Northern Yacht

Club, the crown and anchor burgee of which was fluttering gaily at the mastheads of about forty vessels of all sizes.

"Ay, ay, then, captain, you wass always heff your own way," said the old fellow after him, "but you keep the Kintyre side o' the shore at any rate, for it will all be from the westward till Skipness."

"Thank you, Duncan," was the reply, as the dingy drew alongside, and the speaker jumped on to the forecastle head, while two of the crew lifted the little tub on deck.

"Yes," we heard him mutter to the mate, "Duncan's right. We'll have lots of wind before night, and the more we can have of it the better for us, for she doesn't like dawdling about in a light air, like a dandy."

Scarcely had he spoken when the sound of a gun began to re-echo throughout the glens on each side of the loch, and as the bluish grey smoke floated away from the club yacht, on which was flying the pennant of the acting commodore, we could see three flags being run up to the mast-head.

"Owners to assemble on board Commodore," was the call of the captain, who read it without the aid of a binocular. "Come, men, Cutter away! sharp!" and in less than half a minute more we were doing our best to answer the signal.

There are few pleasanter forms of yachting, it may be said, than cruising in convoy, since, like hunting, there is a certain amount of sociableness in it, and none of the selfishness which characterises shooting and angling, where the sportsman likes to be alone. No doubt, with a pleasant party on board, a safe craft, a steady pilot, a well-filled locker, and a leg of mutton and some fat capons or grouse hanging under that yachtman's larder, the overhang of the counter, anyone, with good companions, can enjoy himself thoroughly; but in the opening and closing cruises, which mark the beginning and end of the season of the Royal Northern and Royal Clyde Yacht Clubs, one can have all the pleasure of good sailing with the best of company and lots of amusements at the awkward *contretemps* of the craft of one's neighbours. Indeed these cruises, very much more than anything on the water, resemble happy hunting days, with pleasant hours by the covert side and a hard gallop across country, for there is always some racing in order to keep up the excitement. Then how pleasant it is to reach down along the edge of the

soft woodland shores of the island of Bute, and in beneath the bold cliffs of Garroch Head, on which the yellow furze is crackling in the sun ; then in answer to signal follow Commodore into Brodick Bay, or the scarcely less picturesque Lamrash, and there let go the mud-hooks for the evening, which is whiled away with a cigar on deck beneath the moonlight, as the band of the Cumberland ship plays a selection of soft music. How happy, too, is it in the morning to rush on deck into the clear "caller" Scotch air, and, as the sunrise gun is fired from the Commodore, watch the burgees being run up to the mast-head in response, while the band strikes up "Rule Britannia." Perhaps the anchorage may be Inverary, the residence of the Duke of Argyll ; perhaps it may be the lovely little bay of Black Farland, in the Kyles of Bute ; but, no matter where, all is healthy jollity and mirth-making. On the occasion of our story, the fleet, which numbered between thirty and forty sailing yachts of all sizes, besides half-a-dozen or more steamers, found their way, the wind having been northerly and fresh, down the Sound of Kilbrannan, which divides Kintyre from Arran, on the evening previous. The big ones had got in early, and, of course, those on board had plenty of time for taking a stroll on shore and inspecting the ancient stone cross, or a drive to the picturesque bay of Macharohanish, which is right open to the Atlantic, and has a grand institution, all golfers will say, a capital golfing course, and a very comfortable hotel on the edge of it. The ten ton fleet stole in with the dusk, their Corinthian owners and crews as merry as crickets, singing lustily, or shouting jokes from boat to boat. Then there were crew serenades, happy visitations, and "hot water and Campeltown," mixed, till far "ayont the twal," each owner in returning to his berth vowing that he would win the prize which was to be sailed for next day, or "run the old hooker ashore."

It was to arrange the course and conditions of sailing for the prizes which were presented for competition in the different classes that we had been called on board. A merry and a strange group, too, we formed, as boat after boat came up to the gangway, the man-of-war-like cutters of the bigger vessels, manned by smartly-dressed crews, being followed by diminutive dingies, filled by their jaunty, jolly, Corinthian owners, who, with short pipe in mouth, old jerseys roughly drawn on, and

balmorals, looked like young herring fishers out for a little diversion. While the numerous boats fall astern and wait for their passengers, there is a hurried consultation on deck, and then come suggestions wide and varied. "Round Arran and into Lamlash," shout some; "Round Ailsa Craig and into Brodick," shouts another; "Stranraer," comes the call from one, and "Bangor in Belfast Loch," cries a young salt who has happy memories of joyous days and nights with the Royal Ulster men at regatta times. The older and the wiser counsels prevail, however, and with the announcement of the decision, "Straight for Ardrishaig, Loch Fyne," there is a hurry-scurry to the gangway, as comes the further shout, "the third class at half-past ten, and the forties and first-class boats at quarter-of-an-hour intervals afterwards." As the boats hurry off in all directions, crews are heaving short, and in the big schooners the men are merrily dancing round the windlass to some favourite sea shanty. Then comes the long *creak, creak* of the hoops on the mast, as like bees the men rush up the rigging and fling themselves on to the halliards, riding down which, one by one, the mainsail is gradually seen ascending. Some minutes more and the calls of "Yo! *he hoe*," are heard all round, while they are swigging away at the peak purchase, the ten-tonners by this time dancing across the bows and sterns of the heavier craft, with everything drawing, and waiting anxiously for the start. Lord Ailsa's little new boat, the Beagle, is there, on her maiden voyage, with Allan Fife, most skilful of pilots, at the tiller. Alas! on the second, the week afterwards, she was sunk, and now lies thirty fathom deep in the Kyles of Bute; and there, too, is Watson's new ten-tonner, Verve (not the present Verve, however), his biggest vessel as yet, also on first trip; and there too, is the then invincible Florence, so well known long afterwards on the Thames. Soon all are aweigh, and filling first on one side and then on another, scethe about like a shoal of little fishes in some sun-lit pool; the fresh morning breeze, which we think may be the first of Duncan's strong nor-wester, raising a strong curl on the smooth water as it comes gently sweeping down from the green and purple Highland hillsides.

With the last of the five minutes of "the warning" slowly ticking out, the tens go ramping down to the line—for on the Clyde punctuality is strictly observed, five minutes meaning 300

seconds, and not from 450 to 500, as with some clubs in the south—and ere the smoke has risen from the second gun as high as the rigging, are stemming it, all drawing. Ere they have disappeared out of the loch, the forties are sent after them, and then comes our turn.

“Give us good time, men,” calls the skipper, “and let’s get out the loch as soon as we can ; there’ll be a nice jam at the mouth, if I’m not mistaken. There’s the gun ! now call them off as they fly. One gone ! you say, and four we have, and the breeze freshening ; lots of time yet. We’ll run down and across the loch and back, and then the gun will be about ready.”

Down we go and try our run, and, as the cry goes, “Ready about,” the call comes again, “Two gone.”

“Two gone !” repeats the skipper, glancing back at the Commodore ; “good time yet, men.”

“Three gone,” follows as we come back across the loch and is followed by “Four gone” as we fill on the right tack for a start well placed 100 yards above the imaginary line. “Four and a half,” is the call again as we tear down, running through the lee of one and past the weather of another, whose skippers are afraid of letting their boat gather way. “Three quarters gone” is scarcely out till we get “the gun” and are away, though not alone, for others have been as smart as ourselves and are bursting up the water alongside. The wind freshens a little, we find, as we draw clear of the hills, and with sheets eased we rush along at a great pace, though not so fast as we would have, had we been allowed to set spinnakers. Single-winged sailing is, however, quite as pleasant in another way, insomuch as you can see what’s doing ahead, while if you are in the last boat and spinnaker up you might nearly as well be at home with the blinds down.

As we close on Devaar we all come together again, for the tide is low and we can see the white breakers curling on the sand-bank of the false sound to the southward. There is not so much water in the north sound as some would like, and the passage is narrower. So, afraid of the “overland route,” those to leeward crowd in till we are all jostling like hunters at an awkward but only gap. “Keep your luff !” is the call on one side ; “Where the deuce are you going to ?” is the call of another, as one’s bowsprit sweeps across another’s taffrail and almost catches hold of the main sheet, while the boom of the boat behind is right across

our rail a couple of feet ahead of the rigging. "If the leading boat goes aground what a nice muck we'll all be in," whispers someone; but there's a sweet little cherub somewhere that takes care of the whole of us, and in a few minutes we are all trying reaching matches with one another up the Sound of Kilbrannan. But what? Can we really believe our eyes? The ten-tonners and the forty-tonners are all lying in the doldrums, just abreast of Carradale, the beautiful summer residence of Colonel Buchanan, the popular master of the Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire Foxhounds. Steadily we sail into it, the ripple at our stern gradually falling away to nothing, while the boom begins to creak uneasily, and we come to even keels all of a heap. "Where has gone Duncan's north-wester?" is the call. "Has it passed overhead, or has it gone south to round the Mull of Kintyre?" Anxious crews are whistling away in the bows like curlews, but still there is no response, and a long, dreary, drifting passage is promised with anchor lights in the rigging to Ardrishaig. Under the sombre hills of Arran there are, however, streaks on the water which bespeak an easterly air, and with the light zephyr barely making itself felt we head across for it, heedless of the old fisherman's warning to keep "well to the west'ard." It is only a "glen breeze," however, and has to be nursed carefully near the shore, tack and tack, so as to have the best made of it. But what is that we see as we are coming off on starboard, with the big Selene away ahead of us? Duncan, the fisherman's, squall coming down over the Kintyre hills like a close pack of hungry wolves, slow and steady, and driving before it a fleeting shower. See, yonder, the leading ten-tonner is bending to it already, and hurrying along the edge of the land, one sees now the others catch it up and are off in pursuit. Anxious eyes on the big schooner are watching them. Slowly she catches it, and now you can see the luff of her mainsail shaking as she has it more strong; now again her head comes round as she gets it more free. We are e'en beginning to smell the first of it ourselves, when the big vessel heels to it, and, through a shower which burst over her, goes away like a startled stag in pursuit of the smaller vessels ahead.

"By St. Mungo, boys, *it's a race*, after all," says our captain, the Viking light gleaming in his eyes. "Stand by the topsail halliards, and be ready to ease sheets, for it's coming down all

smoking. Good heavens ! how the big schooner is travelling now ! ”

Scarcely had he spoken than the gathering wind made the boat heel over to starboard, and, amid the hissing of the squall, the rattling of the blocks, and the booming sound of the wind in the rigging, came the cry, “E-ease sheets !” followed by the call again of “Ease off mainsheet yet !” To windward, all was a long sea of white, mixed shower and spindrift, tearing along before clouds of black, which came over the hill in a scowling manner, like a body of artillery following in the wake of an advance guard to deliver volley after volley. To leeward, however, the sun was shining out clearly, and lighting up the granite peaks of Arran, and the foaming streams which burst down their mountain sides ; the last patch of snow on the peak of grim, grizzly Goatfell gilded by the solar rays into a crown of purple and gold.

“Duncan was right, after all, boys,” says the captain, with eyes occasionally glancing to windward, and occasionally to the racing flag at the mast-head.

“We’ll have it hard from the nor-west, and a long dead thrash up Loch Fyne ; just what’ll suit us.”

With the rail sometimes churning the water into a mill-race in our lee scuppers, we tear on in pursuit of the big schooner, soon passing the ten-tonners, which have brought up to the wind to take in a reef. Behind us come cutters, yawls, and schooners, all mixed up ; some lowering topsails quickly, afraid of the topmasts : some with topsails and topmast lowered without their consent, and dangling wreckage to leeward of the mainsail. Gradually the squalls steady down into a fresh westerly breeze, though occasionally at times it gathers in the gullies and sweeps across our bows, tearing up the spindrift till it resembles drifting snow. All we pray for is that the gear will stand. At times the mast is bending and buckling dangerously beneath the force of the wind-blows ; but the good pine of Oregon has bent its head to many a forest blast in the Far West to save its own loved branches, and is true to the core, tossing back its head victoriously as we lift to a more even keel again, and tear *on—on—onwards*. Masses of spray burst over us at times, and form a rainbow over the bow with the sunshine which strikes out from beneath the passing clouds ; yet the men as they crouch with

red-cowled heads under the rail and watch the fleeting schooner ahead, like our British seaman in chase of some French corvette in the days of old, think only of victory. Like greyhounds stretching after a hare we gallop onwards. Sturgess has painted such a picture of the turf; the straining heads, the almost bursting veins, and the distended nostrils; so let someone give us such a delineation of a genuine yacht race. As we open Loch Fyne we find the wind drawing down the loch, and the cry comes to get in our sheets.

"Mainsheet again, my hearties," is the call of our captain; "now that we have our nose to it, we'll hold the schooner at any rate, if we don't make on her."

Gradually we are headed off, and with everything drawn flat hold off on our old tack across the loch; for a hard beat the whole way to Loch Gilp is promised. With the wind piping strong, we point our bowsprit for Laird Lamont's Bay, on the far-off shore, to meet the big schooner, with every stitch drawing, coming off on starboard tack like a thing of life, the sun shining at times on her canvas till she is a blaze of white.

"Ready about," is now our call, and with a "Lee helm, round she comes, men," we are off for the Kintyre shore again, passing to windward the hurrying crowd behind.

Into the very shore we hold till we can almost tear the branches from the rowan trees, and then fling round again for the other side, down by which is steaming the stately Iona, known to people all over the world, her black smoke drifting away to leeward as hard as it rises from the funnel. Tack and tack, we cross and recross, in by the Skate Island on the one side, then back to Tarbert Loch on the other, sometimes getting a favouring start of westerly wind from the hills when holding off on port, sometimes meeting a heading squall flying north with the shower as we come off on starboard. From heather-clad shore to heather-clad shore our beat is hard and long, and the men, whose beards are white with salt from the spray drying on them in the glimpses of sunshine, are tired with the weary working at the head sheets. At last we fetch up Loch Gilp for home in the wake of the schooner, which allows us some time. All near we have beat we know, but have we beat the flying Selene? Flying along with a free slant, which comes across from Crinan Bay, we cross the buoys of Commodore Lord Glasgow's Valetta,



"hurrah, we've won!"

W. Alexander

and—hurrah ! we get a gun. Bearing up again we luff up to know the result.

“Commodore ahoy ! Who’s won ?”

“The Condor !”

“How much ?”

“*By one second only !*”

And so it was, the Condor won by the cracking of the cap on the gun, after one of the hardest and most exciting races that was ever sailed in full, let alone plain canvas ; and though the Vanduara won many prizes for the Condor’s owner afterwards, she never won nor did Captain Mackie ever sail any that was more hardly contested than that which was sailed from Campeltown to Ardrishaig, and was won by one second.

From the first to last after the breeze came, it was a case of—

Wage away, rage away, blow away breeze,
Stand by your halliards, sheets my boys, ease.
Flare away, tear away, wear away, squall,
Get it all in again. Sheets my boys, haul !
Waste no wind, boys, lose no way,
And the old boat will win to-day.

Blustering Boreas, blow your wild blast ;
Buckle and bend, but stand, my good mast ;
Grumble and growl and rage may the gale ;
Stout be good rigging, and stiff be good sail,
Strain not, strand not, stand, good stay,
And the old boat will win to-day.

Crash away, splash away, through it we’ll thrash,
Bold be the bowsprit, and into it dash :
In, till the stem is smashing it through,
Throb away, bob away, bobstay, be true ;
Spindrift may drive, and lash may the spray,
But the old boat will win to-day.

So come now, be ready, my good commodore,
Be steady, and time us, the race is near o’er ;
Mind now the minutes, and stand by your gun,
There goes the smoke of it ! hurrah, we’ve won ;
Hats off, my hearties, hip, hip, hooray,
For the old boat has won to-day.

BURNING THE HEATHER.

AN ARRAN SCENE.



It is the month of March, and the keen east winds have been blowing for days. The farmer has been busy sowing the oats which are to make yellow the fields in autumn, and raise "the halesome parritch" of the Scotch peasant; the dust, a peck of which, according to an agricultural adage, is worth a peck of gold, has been flying in clouds along the roads, like troops of spectre soldiers on white horses; and everything in the country is as dry as tinder. Buds and blossoms seem all to be hanging to the stems awaiting signals from the west winds and an opening song from the wee birds, which yet, warned by previous experiences, know that they may build their nests only to have them lined with snow. As soon as the east winds go away all will be budding and carolling, moist weather and sunshine; so the keen, cautious Northern farmer, whose flock of hardy little black-faced sheep is his sole concern, knows that it is time, while yet the law allows him, to burn the heather. A disquisition on the law of "Muirburning" would be as wearisome as the dissertations of a couple of Scotch advocates on the law of multiple poinding, so need not be entered upon; but it may be explained that, for divers reasons, the chief of which is possibly the damage done to grouse and game generally, it is only allowed in certain months, and never after the pairing time has set in. It used to be believed in Scotland that the burning of the heather did damage so far away as the French vineyards, a conclusion possibly arrived at from the fact that in troublous times the French luggers did not care to land their claret in the face of burning heather hills, which were supposed to be blazing war beacons. But in order to raise some sprouts of young heath for the sheep, the long heather under which the little brown muirfowl have snugly nestled, with the snow above them for a blanket, during the most severe of the winter storms, must be fired and burnt down close, a work, too

which must be done with care. The gamekeeper possibly does not like to see many parts of his moor burned, but experience tells him, if he be an intelligent fellow, that grouse require young heather quite as much as the sheep do, and that the burnt stripe is for the good of the laird as well as the tenant. Were, indeed, more old heather burnt according to a well-planned system, and more healthy food raised, we would read of fewer emaciated birds being found on the moors on the "Twelfth," and hear possibly far less of grouse disease.

But the Highland shepherds are waiting at the foot of the hill by the sea-shore, anxious to make a start. It is gloaming on the Arran coast, under the steep, ragged peak of Goatfell, and scarcely a sound is heard save the waves washing amongst the rocky boulders, or the long *whish* of the tumbling Sannox burn as it rolls down the steep hill-side. Away over the Frith the Cumbræ light begins to give out its fitful flash, while the iron-works at Ardeer and Kilwinning raise a red glare in the sky as they blaze and blink away in a fiendish manner to the clouds. Lying far away and low are the harbour lights of Ardrossan, which become more clear as darkness descends. A word or two in Gaelic, from shepherd to shepherd, a Gaelic remonstrance to the dogs—those rough-haired Arran collies, without which no flock of sheep could be gathered on those steep hill-sides—and we are soon moving up and up, till where the long ling and tangling heather almost trips us.

Separated from the mainland by the Frith of Clyde, the good people of the island of Arran still retain all their Highland characteristics, a result due to the fact that the Duke of Hamilton holds back at arm's length the good folks of Glasgow, who have had longing eyes for many a day after its quiet little nooks and crannies, and its heather-fringed beaches, whereon to build some nice seaside residences. A few old natives only have been favoured in this way; and all things considered, this is just as well. Once throw open the place to the Glasgow builders, and in a couple of years would be run up hydropathic establishments, hotels of all kinds—temperance and intemperance—model lodging-houses, rival kirks, and a hundred other nuisances, which have made horrible to the tourist many of the quiet places of Scotland. Mountebank evangelists and German bands would soon follow, and Arran, the grandest retreat on

the Clyde for a day's holiday, would soon be spoiled. At present there is no need for a "Mountain Access Bill," for the tourist may roam through deepest glen, or to the summit of the highest peak, without the slightest interference, unless he should be found molesting game. Within the little cottages all is comfort ; for a month's rent from some coast folks in the summer, who, for sake of the fresh air, the freedom and the quiet, prefer the unpretentious little houses, with small square rooms, to more palatial residences of the Cowal or the Bute shores, give them as much as will get them the luxuries of life, and the necessities they always have in plenty. Their holidays are few, but they are enjoyed, it may be said, to the last scrape of the cat-gut or the last drone of the bagpipes. Who that was there on the 10th of December, 1873, can forget the marriage rejoicings of the Duke and Duchess ?—the gun-firing on the hill-side, where gunpowder was burnt as if at a bombardment, and round after round given for the happy couple ? Away high up on Goatfell anxious eyes watched for the signal from the little telegraph office by the beach, which was to announce from London that the ceremony had been performed, and when it came a cheer went up such as only can be given in the Highlands and by Highlandmen ; and ere the rolling echoes of the first round of guns had come back from Glen Sannox, where the reports were repeated with loud and almost startling effect, enthusiastic natives were dancing about the priming-holes again with hot pokers. Then the Highland dance set in with such severity for a week, that the people of the island were rarely on more than one leg at a time. Nor was the occasion without its romance, for at the principal ball the worthy natives, with a kindness which is a characteristic, suggested that "it wass too bad for the band to heff to do all the playin', and not heff a dance too." So a lady gave a reel on the piano while they gave their feet a change from their hands. The result of this was the engagement of the first violinist, and one, too, well known in front of the footlights, to one of the handsomest ladies in the island, and the two are now one of the happiest married couples to be found in the far, far north. The only man who was not in the dance on the island on that day, and he was moving about on crutches, seemed to be old Jamie McKillop, the Duke's faithful old henchman, who had seen him kill his first grouse, and who had

loaded guns in his day to the Auld Duke, besides lots o' Frenchmen, including the late Emperor, a fair shot as he acknowledged ; but on being told that he had been made King of France, replied characteristically. "Ay, ay, I believe sae ; he micht have dune ower a bit place like France, but I wad na say for a muckle island like the Isle of Arran."

But the east wind, cold and dry, is rising up from the sea, and we are on the edge of a flat of old heather which is strong, tough, and ungenerous. A box of lucifers are produced, and in a few seconds a lighted one is applied to the dry grass beneath a tuft of long tangle, under which may have run many a grouse cock. Slowly it catches and creeps up stalk and stalk till there is a flame a few inches long, when the wind catches it, and away it goes with a *whiz* like a rocket. Further off appears almost at the same time another light, and the advance of the fire seems to be sounded. Fanned by the dry breeze, the flame soon finds its way through the rabbit-like runs, then spurts in fiery jets through some opening. Now and then a heather-knot is caught, and a rocket-like crack is heard, while the sparks fly right and left while some grass-woven patch is suddenly seized by a puff of wind, and spreads like a flash of sheet lightning, which almost dazzles one. "Can that be an adder hissing ?" you ask of yourself, but it is only the sap-formed steam escaping from some sapling's root, the bark of which is almost cracked under the fierce heat. Hemlock stems, too, are crooning away like kettles on the hob, and now and then some loud crack announces the bursting of some little vegetable boiler, where, there being no safety valve, the steam pressure has proved too great. Greedily still the flame rushes up hill ; now catching on the bank of some mountain stream, and racing with a rising fire of sparks along its bank, kissing the haughty rowan tree, and throwing a glare to the very bottom of the pools beneath. Over the crackling noise you can hear the whirr of wings, and across the light, and free from the smoke, goes away an old blackcock for some undisturbed hill-side, where he can watch the red fiend sweep over his favourite haunts. The hare, the rabbit, the weasel, and the field-mouse are all friends in danger, and scamper on ahead till where vegetation ceases and there is no more food for their new enemy, whose appetite appears insatiable. Lighting here and there a patch with a dry gorse

or heather torch, which may have been missed, the shepherds go through their work coolly and easily, their faces lit up by the broad acres of flame, which away ahead shows the smoke gathering like a dark cloud at the brow of the mountain, and in rear lights up the frith almost to the Ayrshire coast, casting a wine glow on the sails of numerous vessels beneath, eclipsing their side lights, and showing their decks as if under a limelight's glare.

It was such a glare that drew once from the very same spot to Turnberry Castle, in Ayrshire, six hundred years ago, The Bruce in mistake, for he had been watching from Brodick for days for a beacon signal for his comrades to come over and attack the English; and in the castle can still be seen the old oak table where he was wont to dine every day when so waiting.

With the rising of the sun, the glare on the hill-side diminishes, though from afar off the grey smoke tells of the spreading of the fire, which is, however, well directed. A south-west shower, which makes the heather spring soon, extinguishes the smouldering flames, and where the fire burned red the heath shines purple over one of the loveliest bays in the world ere the month of August, when many a white-winged yacht may be seen riding proudly at anchor underneath. Many a happy morning can yachtsmen of the Royal Northern Yacht Club recall of the sweet anchorage under Brodick Castle, of flying starts for Ardrishaig, of reel dancing at the Douglas Hotel after dinner, and of midnight victories after long races down Loch Fyne, heralded by the commodore's gun, which made the echoes ring in the glens, and the natives think that a French fleet had invaded their shores. And then what a bonnie place when the gun has fired at sunrise, should you be lying off at anchor or sailing easily with the land breeze from Glen Rosa, is :

BRODICK BAY.

Oh, hear ye no the grouse cock crow, among the heath-clad hills?
 And hear ye no the rock dove coo in the caves o' the Corriegills?
 And hear ye no the lasses sing in the green fields making hay?
 And hear ye no our voices ring as we sail in Brodick Bay?

It's bonnie to feel the fresh, fresh breeze sweep down fair Rosa's Glen,
 And it's bonnie to look at the misty haze that hangs o'er Gnuiss Ben,
 And it's grand to see o'er Goatfell's peak the mist trail long and grey,
 But it's bonnier far to ride with the tide in bonnie Brodick Bay.

Oh, it's sweet to look at the white, white foam rush in o'er the yellow
sand,
And it's sweet to see the white, white clouds trail o'er the mountains
grand,
And it's sweet to look at the purple heath and the burnies whimpling
play,
But it's sweeter to rest on the billow's breast in our boat in Brodick
Bay.

We hae wandered monie a weary mile and monie a mile sail'd the sea,
We've seen bonnie bays in summer days, but a bonnier ne'er saw we,
We may sail and sail 'neath every gale, ay, sail for monie a day,
On a bonnier sight ne'er our eyes shall light than bonnie Brodick
Bay.



FAREWELL TO THE SHOOTING SEASON.



WHEN the mild weather forces the snowdrops and the crocuses above the ground, the sportsman's year may be considered over, so far as shooting is concerned. No doubt February frosts and snows may bring a few woodcock, but, with only ground game free, pheasants being fenced round by the Close Time Act, no one cares much for covert shooting. Wild duck and teal may still be had, of course, in certain countries, and the rabbit will always afford an afternoon's sport, though if the ferrets have been much through the holes in the early part of the season he will be slow to bolt. Guns, therefore, will this month in most cases be laid past, and the season declared over, except where special kinds of shooting may be had, such as in the West Highlands, where many a good old seal is stalked in the spring months. It is not without a pang, however, that a sportsman lays aside his fowling-piece for the year, for, though angling may be one of the most enjoyable of pastimes, it does not afford that amount of exercise which one gets from tramping over moss and fell.

It was while thinking over my plans for the interregnum that the postman brought a letter, the address on the envelope of which raised warm hopes. The pith lay in the postscript, which was—

“Bring your gun. It is far on in the season, but there is enough on the ground to fill a bag, and we have lots of snipe.”

The welcome invitation was from a keen sportsman, a country laird in the North, as famous for his hospitality as for his success with his live stock in the cattle show yard. He was one of that good old landlord school of lairds, the last representatives of which were possibly—and what coursing men will forget them?—Graham of Limekilns, Sharpe of Hoddum, and Hyslop of Tour. Southern manners are fast rubbing them out, however, just as southern mail trains have shunted the old stage coaches off the roads. Preparing some cartridges for mixed shooting, I overhauled my gun, seeing that the locks, extractors, and

rebounding plungers worked freely, my old red setter surveying, from its comfortable resting-place on the hearth-rug under the glow of the blazing fire, the whole with apparent indifference, having long ago become accustomed to watching my getting ready for sporting expeditions, I retired to dream of snap shots at ducks, "rights and lefts at snipe, and warm corners by the covert side." Next morning I was up long before the lark, and was busy at breakfast, when the "crunching" sound of wheels on the gravel outside told me that my man was ready with the trap, so seizing my gun, which was standing by the mantelpiece in its waterproof cover, and my empty game-bag, I pitched Sancho into the box underneath the seat, and jumped up beside my driver.

"Hard frost, Sandy, I see," was my remark, as he sent the old mare spinning down the approach.

"Verra hard, sir!" was his reply, "but a rare day for the gun, as the ground's dry, and there'll be good walking across the plough; the hares will all be on the plough, I should think, the day, sir; the wild weather's been keeping them in the cover, and hares don't like woodlands if they can make themselves comfortable in the open."

The morning indeed was a lovely one. The sun shining out strong and brilliant, and causing the frosted ground to gleam as if strewn with pearls. The air was clear, too, and bracing, and altogether the weather was of that kind which makes a sportsman fret at home, and long to be in the fields fondling his fowling-piece. In the Autumn one can experience no such feeling, as, though August mornings are cool, the atmosphere generally becomes oppressive if there be not a breeze blowing, while the rank vegetation buzzing with insect-life makes shooting appear unnatural, and it certainly is not half so enjoyable as in winter, when the brackens have all been frosted down, the foliage swept from the trees and hedges, and rabbits and hares are full-grown and healthy and hardy from having to work harder on the scant pastures for a living. However, each man to his taste, and if men prefer the noise, smoke, and slaughter of battues to five brace made by hard walking and good shooting, let them do so. They must not, however, be allowed to call it sport.

After a drive of ten miles, which was done in something less

than an hour, the little mare being very smart, and the road a well-kept one, free from loose "macadam," we found ourselves at the entrance to Lawfield, the old Laird being at the lodge-gate ready for my reception, coat off and hedge-knife in hand, busy hedge-pruning, this being his favourite occupation, and one at which he was an adept, his boundary hedges being quite a treat to look at as viewed from the roadside. After the usual compliments had been passed, I entered the house, and whipped off the "wee drap" which is generally offered to every man after a drive, no matter how early the hour, if the weather be cold, and then together we walked down to the little lodge where lived his gardener and gamekeeper, who filled a somewhat similar post to that which Sandy held with me. We found the two worthies discussing the probabilities of our finding game, and arranging the beat, which was to be "round the mairches on the Duke's side." We held on over the thinly-clad lea-fields, with Sancho, our only dog, at my heels—for setters or pointers are of little use hare-finding, indeed they are of little use at all for winter shooting—until we came to the ploughed land, a field of oat-stubble which had just been turned over.

"Rather cold, is it not, Sandy?" said the Laird.

"May be, sir, but it's drier, and not so cold as the Duke's moss the day. Ye see, Laird, the furrow drains the watter away from their form. Now, on the lea-land their forms fill up till they're soaking with watter. Of course there's hard frost the day, but before this frost set in they had left the wet moss, and they had their forms all ready made before the frost came on keen, for this frost didn't set in till the morning."

We searched five or six acres of the red plough very carefully, and were just beginning to despair, when there was a shout from my henchman, and, looking round, we observed him with both hands in the air as a sign for caution.

"Here she is, gentlemen. I was sure we would find her; just be ready now, and keep a lookout, for she'll have a neighbour not far off."

Approaching, we could see a little mound of rough earth heaved up above one of the little plough-ridges of the furrow, but no hare.

"She's there, gentlemen, as snug as she'll be in the bag on my back, if ye can handle a gun at all, in half a minute."

The Laird having motioned me forward to do the work, not of much difficulty, certainly, I stepped up, and sure enough saw, as I had seen many a time, puss literally sewed down into her form. I could see her move as I approached, no doubt disengaging herself, and, knowing all the time that her eyes were upon me, I walked as if to pass her. She lay still, but the moment I glanced at her big brown eyes, she was up, off, and over, as I just let her run thirty yards, and then up with my gun, and let her have the shot behind the ears, so that she turned a somersault and lay dead. We searched the remainder of the field for the neighbour, but without any avail. On passing through a gate, however, to a park which had been laid down in permanent pasture, there was another shout from Sandy, who said it was a matter of certainty that her neighbour was in that rough piece of ground in the corner. The Laird complied with his request to have a walk through it, and sure enough up jumped puss from her form amongst the withering thistles to roll over to the right-barrel of the old gentleman's muzzle-loading Joe Manton. Thanks to Sandy, whose eyes were evidently specially formed for finding hares, we got three more before we arrived at the marshes, which were said to be full of snipe. Sure enough we found them pretty numerous, and the old Laird managed to knock down a brace out of the first "wisp" of them we came across. It was very warm work for a time, and we bagged some fourteen before we left them for larger game, greatly to the delight of Sandy, who could not see any fun in killing what he called "sic trash." He liked to see something killed which would fill a pot. In a belting near the house we found four pheasant-cocks and three woodcock, and knocked down a brace of partridges from a covey which had somehow escaped during the whole summer, having been on the Lawfield side when the Duke's party came our way, and the Duke's side when we came round. These, with about a dozen of rabbits, seven hares, a teal, duck, and three golden plover, made up a well-mixed bag in as good a day's winter shooting as it has ever been my privilege to enjoy.

TOUTING A STEEPLECHASE-RIDER.

CHAPTER I.

“ND what are you goin' to ride, Mister Bridoon, in the Grand Aintree?”

“The winner!” was the quick reply, as the person addressed, after depositing his hat on the rack of the smoking compartment of a first-class carriage on the Great Northern, pulled on a travelling-cap and produced a cigar-case which he held out to the speaker, a well-known bookmaker, then helped himself.

“Eh, the winner, eh? Coom, now, that's pootin' it strong. Back Stitch is faavoreet, and Mister Coonikam rides *that*, and Captain Muddleville he rides Vainglory, they tells me, and they're at twenty to one below that.”

“I don't ride either of these, Bessemer,” said the other. “You're quite right there, but I'll take a thousand to thirty I ride the winner all the same.”

“It's a bet,” said the other, producing his book and marking it down.

“Twice, if you like,” said the smoker, smiling.

“Twice!” was the answer, and the pencil rolled across the face of the betting-book again.

“And now, Mr. Bridoon, you must give it a name,” said the other. “I must have a name.”

“I'll give you nothing of the kind,” said the other, very sharply. “I said I would take the odds you promised 'gainst my riding the winner; if I don't finish first and pass the scales free of objection, I pay you; if I finish first and it's all right, you pay me. You'll get the name of the horse from the card when you see me on the back of it.”

“Well, you're a hard 'un and a hot 'un, Mr. Bridoon, but you'll tell me this, eh? Is it one as has been backed?”

“Well, that's asking a little too much; but I'll say this Bessemer, if it has, it has not been to any amount.”

"All right, I see—something you've got in the country. Well, bets are bets, mind, especially after they're booked, and I wouldn't mind losing my two thousand, but I think, when the horse is going to be backed, you might give me the nod."

"Not a nod or a wink," was the reply, as he jerked his cigar, which had not been drawing well, out of the window, and started a fresh one. You fellows find out too much, and a devilish sight too soon, and you can set your wits a-wool-gathering for this one. The owner's a deuced good sort, and won't back his horse for much, but that's no reason why I should spoil his friends' chances for having the best of a good thing. No, no, Bessemer, find out for yourself. Get Judex or Lockett, or some of these knowing chaps, to let you know, seeing they are so well informed, but don't ask me. I'm a dumb jockey in this case, and don't want to get back my voice. Find out, I say, if you can. Here's my station."

"Thank you for your tip, Mr. Bridoon, all the same, I'll find it out; maybe I won't, maybe I will."

"Ha, ha! do!" was the reply, "do, Bessemer! ha, ha! good-bye," and one of the best cross-country riders in the country crossed the platform, jumped lightly into a Whitechapel which was waiting, took the reins from the nattily-dressed little groom and drove off smartly as the train started.

"He's a smart boy, and no mistake!" soliloquised the book-maker, "and has good hands too—ay has he!—and a good head on a horse, but not off it. Backs himself to ride the winner, and thinks he's smart in not lettin' me know what it is. Deuced clever he'll call it! Oh yes, I know! He'll chuckle too, and tell some of the division and their dark 'un how I made the bets just to get the name, and how he did me. Well, well! poor things! I've seen 'em go to the wall for years—always through thinking they were clever; whilst infernal idiots, who knew they were fools, let things alone and came out of it. Something in the country they've got, and no mistake. That's all I want to know. Trust me, but I'll soon find out all!" and, throwing his cigar out of the window, he wrapped his big head in a newspaper and went off to dream of unbacked winners, double events, and the many things which Heaven is supposed to send book-makers in answer to their prayers for their daily bread.

The Hon. Benjamin Bridoon, of the 18th Corkscrew Guards,

had been a clever horseman from his boyhood. He had literally left the cradle for the saddle, and at nine years of age was noted as a clever man across country with his father's hounds, his steed, a sheltie of twelve hands, being better at going through than over. His bridle-hands, like those of all good horsemen, had been made early; he had formed a seat which was natural and sure, and he had developed a love which amounted to a passion for the sport. College-days over, he gave up the cricket-field for the racing-jacket; and, at the time of our incident in the railway train, was looked upon as "the coming man." His services indeed were always in demand, and were readily given without one single consideration for his neck, for "Benzie," as he was styled by his old companions at Eton, was of opinion that a man should, in order to be a good horseman and clever at "mistakes," have a lot of bad falls—a Napoleonic style of reasoning which served but to show his enthusiasm for the sport.

A week passed, and still old Bessemer did not notice the "coming," as the turf-writers call it, of any particular horse in the market. The dark ones he had, however, been able to narrow down to a very small lot, but where they were trained, and what they were equal to, he was ignorant of. He had seen young Bridoon twice or three times since, but elicited nothing more than the chaffing interrogation: "Well, Bessemer, you'd like to know what I'm to have my leg over at Aintree, eh? Well, you just find out ere it is too late."

"Maybe I will, lad," was the quiet reply, "but I dunno care nowt neither, for t'owd Bellwether is certain to canter in."

Gradually the intervening days slipped past, but no sign was made. The old bookmaker began to think he had won his sixty, and that Mister Bridoon's good thing had fallen through. At least, he said, when looking at his letters in the morning, "It's dang'd queer I hain't 'ad one single word from Dick Lyfast, though I gave 'im three pownies to do nowt else than find out all about it. Dang me if I thought he'd gone and blew it or boozed it, I'd hang 'im, that I would; but he ain't failed me yet, so I'll give him time"

CHAPTER II.

IT was blowing hard, and raining, if anything, harder, when a slenderly-made, though active and tough-made, young fellow arrived with the night train from the South at a little roadside station in the North. Visitors to that part, more especially by night trains, were few at that season of the year; and the stationmaster seemed a little surprised at the occurrence. Still more so was he when another—a stout, round-faced, jolly-looking man, clad in a long ulster coat—jumped out of the next compartment.

“Is this Doggerston station?” said the slender man.

“Yes, sir, Doggerston station.”

“Then I get out here for Slingvale?”

“Yes, sir, but it’s five good miles off, sir.”

“But is there not a trap waiting for me? There was to have been a trap sent for me from the Mulligan Arms.”

“Perhaps that’s it now, sir,” said the stationmaster, “just coming over the bridge there,” and sure enough the trap it was; with side-lamps glimmering through the darkness. As young Bridoon, for such it was, seized hold of his portmanteau, which he had carried with him, stowed under the carriage-seat, the stout man asked him if it would be too much of a favour to give him a ride over to the Mulligan Arms at Slingvale, seeing the night was just a bit darkish for tramping.”

“If there’s room, you are most decidedly welcome,” was the good-natured reply; and, fortified by this answer, the burly old gentleman lost no time in overcoming any scruples which the driver might have had by slipping him a shilling.

“And what brings you into these lonely parts at this season of the year?” asked the crack young cross-country rider, when they had got clear of the railway-avenue and were rattling merrily down the main road.

“Guanner, sir, *Guanner*, and bonedust, sir, and them fertilizin’ manures for spring crops, which farmers are needin’,

sir. You, maybe, could be doin' with a ton or two yourself, sir, if ye're in farmin' line. First-class stuff it is, sir, for turnips or 'taters, sir, and no better house than ours in the trade. Just have my card, sir."

Producing his pocketbook, he took from it a business-card, which, by the light of the lamp at the side, Mr. Bridoon made out to run as follows:—

GRASSUM AND CLOVERBUDS,
MANURE AGENTS AND MANUFACTURERS,
15, CHURCH STREET, BRISTOL.

Peruvian guanos, bonedust, dissolved bones and phosphates, and fertilizers of all kinds always on hand.

Presented by Mr. Rawlad.

"Well, guano is scarcely in my line, Mr. Rawlad," said the young fellow, laughing, "or I might buy from you, and I'm afraid that all in our business dissolve their own bones."

"Just so, ay, maybe, that a'll no say; but what line be you on the road? If ye was sellin' oilcake, or feedin' stuffs, we might go halves with the gig maybe, and do a good trade together like."

"Ah, well," said the young one, "we might, maybe, but I'm only down here on a short journey to see an old friend, and will be going back to-morrow night, thanking you all the same."

Wheeling sharp to the right, on rounding a large pine-wood, they had before them the little town of Slingvale, situated about three miles from the harbour of Strontian, from which runs daily to and from Belfast a first-class service of steamers. In a few minutes they were at the door of the Mulligan Arms, where Bridoon was saluted, in a most unmistakable Irish brogue, by a party who had been anxiously waiting his arrival. Another rushed out from the bar-parlour to shake his hand, and the welcome seemed to be as warm as what one gets at Baldoyle or the Curragh.

"And is this a friend wid yez?" said the first speaker, a sharp-faced, keen-eyed old Irishman.

"Oh no, some traveller in the manure trade I gave a lift to from the station, wants hard to sell me a ton of guano."

The reply seemed reassuring, for all passed inside, where a drop of the "cratur" was soon poured out for all, including the big, burly, good-natured Mr. Rawlad. Some nicely-cooked loin-

chops and ham and eggs having been disposed of quickly by the new arrivals, an adjournment was again made to the little back-parlour, where, over the steaming whiskey-punch the guano-seller told wonderful stories and jokes, and sung songs as the youngest of the Irishmen said, as if he had swallowed a live blackbird. Yet in the pauses Mr. Bridoon and the Irishmen would be seen to whisper together. "The ould horse," said the elder, has got over the effects of the voyage completely, and the young one is as fresh and as fit as a fiddle. The course is in capital order, and I've seen the ditch filled with water myself. We'll try them at even weights, and Barney here'll make the running for Snipe Dhust. Though he was singing away to himself, apparently quite unconcerned, Mr. Rawlad had his right ear distended till the drum was almost cracking, and as the word Snipe Dhust was mentioned, his eyes gave a merry twinkle. The whispering business over, there was more story-telling and singing, and the old Irishman remarked, as he retired for the night, that a "bigger warm-hearted, queer ould cove he hadn't met for many a day." "Half-past six in the morning sharp, and breakfast at six, mind!" was the last call from the stairhead to the landlord, and then the Mulligan Arms, with lights out, was as silent as the hamlets of the secluded little village.

CHAPTER III.

NEXT morning, all, including the good-natured and queer guano-seller, breakfasted at the hour appointed, and divided at the door—the Irishman and Bridoon to mind their own business whatever it was, and the former to solicit orders for his manures. The latter drove off in a westerly direction in a waggonette, while Mr. Rawlad was superintending the getting-out of a dogcart. They lifted hats and so bade good-bye. Three miles up the road the waggonette party got down, and found at the edge of a wood a couple of horses ready waiting for them, and close to the hedge a set of ordinary farmyard-scales.

"Good morning, Masterton," said Bridoon, as he looked over what was apparently the youngest of the horses very carefully. "You certainly have got him in rare condition."

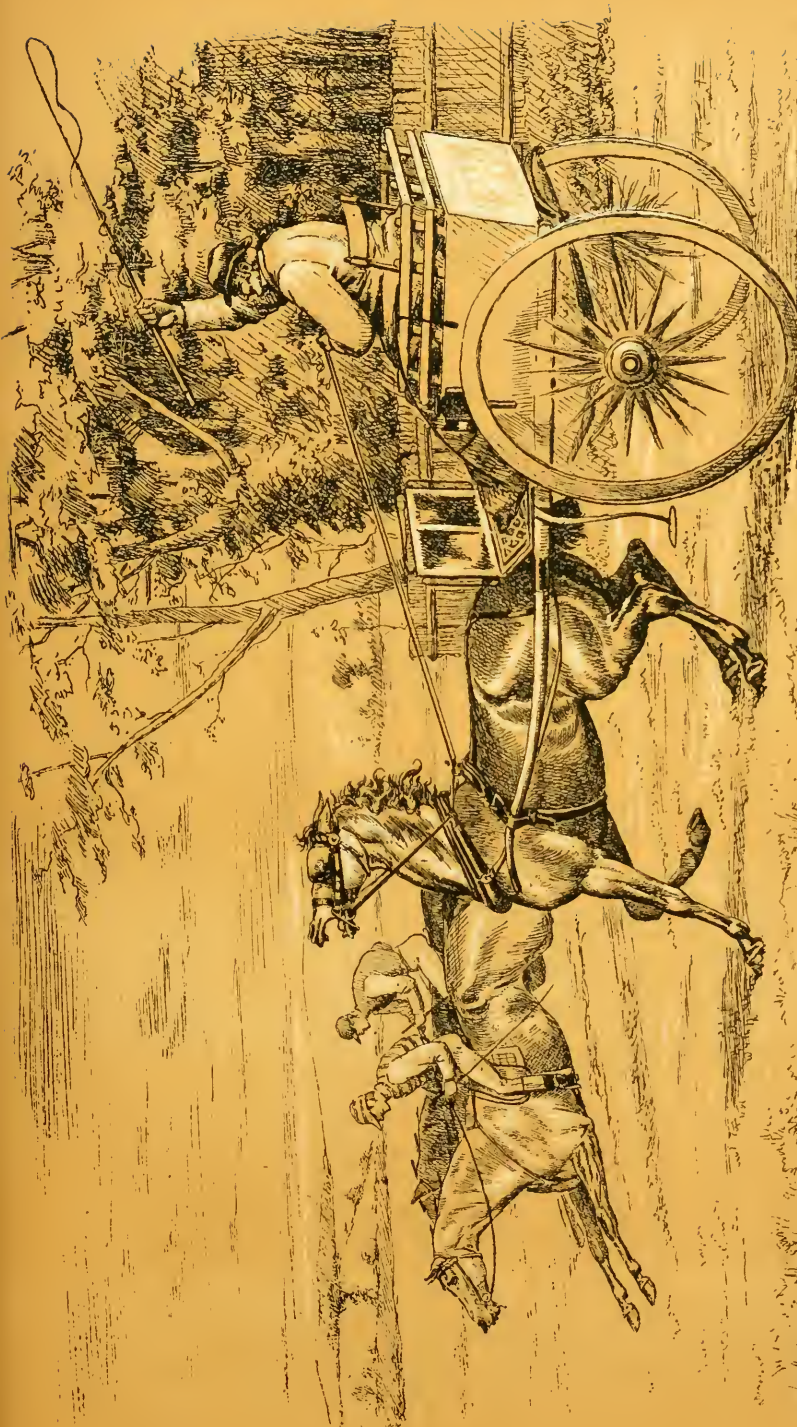
"Yes, sir, if he isn't fit to run he never will be," said the private trainer—for such he was—to the confederacy of which Bridoon was chief.

The young Irishman named Barney threw off quickly his large frieze ulster which covered him down to the heels, and revealed himself in boots, breeches, and spurs; and Mr. Bridoon, on casting off his overcoat, quite as ample, showed himself to be similarly attired. Both men seized the saddles which were held out to them, both brought down the beam in an easy, light manner, but no more. The weights were, as arranged, equal for both, though, as the Irish jockey remarked, "I should be able to give you a stone, though I hope you'll show it to be the other way about." In a few minutes both horses were mounted, and at the word "Go!" the old horse was sent in advance of the other at a brisk pace along a stretch of grass. A stiff hedge they skimmed over lightly, sank a ploughed hill-side, leaped a stone wall, and disappeared for a few minutes out of view to reappear afar off with the old horse still making running.

"Barney's sending him on," said the Irishman, "but your horse is going all within himself, Mister Masterton," for Mr. Bridoon, through the glass, could be seen holding the young one back. The pace was increased as they came along the slope of the hill in front of the onlookers, both horses taking their fences in beautiful style; then they bent to the right, flew the wet ditch, and, at a regular bursting pace, started for home—the winning-post being the starting-post.

"Begorra! Barney's making the ould one fly!" said the Irishman excitedly, "but, bedad! he's not able to shake off the young one!"

"It's a thousand to one on Snipe Dust!" shouted Masterton a moment afterwards, as, half-a-mile from home, young Bridoon gave his horse its head and let it draw level. A hundred yards from home, the old horse was done with, and the young horse cantered in an easy winner of his trial, just as a man drove round the corner of the wood in a gig, waving his whip and shouting: "Well done, mister! I'm danged if I seen sich a horserace sin



Well done mister!

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Pullamby market ! Eh, mon, but that nag's a gey guid 'un ! I'd give five tons o' Peruvian guanner for that ane, I'se would, I warrant you."

The old Irish trainer laughed, though Masterton looked a little suspicious.

"Don't mind him," said the former, "he's a raw green traveller in the manure trade, a-beggin' for orders."

"It's just as I thought," said Mr. Bridoon, riding up, "my horse can give Cruiskeen a stone and an easy beating, and that's quite good enough to win anything."

"Bedad ! and it is, and it's meself wouldn't ha' believed it ; but you done it, and at a good pace too."

"All that we've got to do is to get the money right, Master-ton," said the young fellow, nodding acquiescence.

"Yes, sir," said the other.

"Where's the nearest telegraph-office—I understand there's not one at Slingvale ?"

"There's not, sir ; but there's one at Doggarvale, five miles from this."

"Well, then, give me my top-coat."

Having got hold of his top-coat, and taken from the inside pocket a telegram-form, he asked the old Irishman to hold his hat for his desk, and wrote out the message :—

From	B. BRIDOOON,	To	R. WILSON,
	Slingvale.		Victoria Club,
			London.

The puppy has got well over the distemper, and is safe to win. So on with commission at once.

"There," he said, "Wilson knows what I mean by that, as I arranged with him before coming away. Now who is to deliver this ?"

"Are you driving Doggarvale way ?" he asked of Mr. Rawlad.

"I am ; is there anything I can do for you ?"

"Yes, as you pass the post-office you might hand in this message, which is about a dog I bought from a friend here, and be sure about it first thing when you get in."

"It's the first thing I'll do," was the reply, as he folded it up, stuck it in his waistcoat-pocket, and gave the little mare he was driving her head.

* * * *

Next morning, when Mr. Benjamin Bridoon got hold of a London daily paper, he turned rapidly to the sporting column, and there found, as he expected, that a commission had evidently been thrown into the market to back Snipe Dust, which had come with a rattle in the betting. "Ah," he said, "Mr. Rawlad sent off my message in good time from Doggarvale, and all we have got to do is to win. At twelve noon he found his way to the Victoria Club, in Wellington-street, where he asked for Wilson. Judge of his surprise when the first exclamation which fell from the latter was: "Why the devil didn't you let me have your telegram sooner? Bessemer had backed the horse for every shilling he could get before it came in."

"What time did you receive it?"

"Twelve o'clock."

"But you did receive it?"

"Of course I did—here it is."

"D——n these country telegraph-girls with their carelessness! But how or where could Bessemer have got his information?"

"Your Irish friends must have done you."

"That I'll swear they didn't; they were never out of my sight till two o'clock on the afternoon of the trial."

Notwithstanding the rumours which were prevalent as to the non-running of Snipe Dust for the Grand Aintree, Snipe Dust did run, and won, as the newspapers put it, in the commonest of canters, Mr. Bridoon having but to sit still and hold him. But the division behind the horse were not somehow satisfied. They had been forestalled in the market, and were inclined to blame one another for having played false. They were all together at the outside of the paddock, taking their seats in their hired conveyance for home when they heard a well-known voice shout: "Hey, Capting! good luck to you!"

"Hilloa, Mr. Rawlad!—that's Mr. Rawlad," said young Bridoon.

"Mr. Rawlad!—Mr. Lyfast, you mean!—the cleverest scoundrel on the turf, the man that does old Bessemer's horse-watching and dirty work!"

The Irish trainer exchanged looks with the winner of the great race, and the hearts of both sank far down into their waistcoats. Could it really be? Yes, there was no mistake, for as he drove off

he shouted : " Hey, mind the guanner! First-class guanner for green crops, like you, eh? Good-day, old man, glad to see the *Poop has got over the distemper.*"

Young Benjamin Bridoon said nothing, but he will be a very clever man who will ever again try on him the experiment of touting a steeplechase-rider.

MY LOVE AND I, WHEN SAILING.



RIGHTLY shines the noonday sun,
Autumn winds are blowing ;
To the beach the wavelets run,
Spindrift from them flowing.
Come with me, my love, then, come,
Ne'er shalt thou be wailing.
Sailing through the Highland seas,
Sailing with the west-land breeze,
Care nor sorrow there shall tease
My love and I, when sailing.

Rising gently o'er each sea,
We shall breast each billow ;
Far from care—from sorrow free,
Health shall smooth thy pillow.
Come with me, my love, then, come,
Hearts let's be regaling.
We shall sail the wild waves o'er,
We shall steer by Jura's shore ;
We shall hear Corr'wrekan's roar,
My love and I, when sailing.

My Love and I, when Sailing.

On the snowy main-sail white,
See, the sun is striking,
Silvery glowing in the light,
Heart's delight of Viking.
Come with me, my love, then, come,
Hearts ne'er let's be failing.
We shall breast the rolling wave,
We shall see Columba's grave,
We shall look in Fingal's Cave,
My love and I, when sailing.

We shall, o'er the Coolin Hills,
See the sunset falling,
Lulled to sleep by Highland rills,
Waked by curlew's calling.
Come with me, my love, then, come,
At the stern oft trailing,
Flowing locks of yellow hair,
Yellow as thine own, my fair ;
Tresses that the mermaids wear—
My love and I, when sailing.



THE PUDDLETON AND GROUND V. THE COTTON SPINNERS OF BOBBINSTOWN.

“ELL, this is what I call a fix,” said the Honorary Secretary of the Puddleton Cricket Club, to the captain of the first eleven, as he read a telegram which had just been handed to him at the bar of the “Clover Leaf.”

“What’s a fix?”

“Why, this is from the captain of the Cotton Spinners, at Crickley, to say that they have just left, but have had a wild night of it, and hopes there is a good barber’s shop at Puddleton, not a man having been able to shave himself for two days, and don’t want to appear before Lord Puddleton and swells unless cleaned up a little.”

“As if Lord Puddleton cared one sneeze of snuff whether a Cotton Spinner played with an inch of hair on his chin and his face unwashed so long as he could play cricket.”

“Well, but the honour of Puddleton is concerned,” said the enthusiastic native. “Why, they’ll be going away back home saying that Puddleton’s a miserable little one-horse place without a barber’s shop.”

“Let them say it, and be hanged; but there’s Lord Puddleton himself, in full flannel ready for the match, in his dog-cart, and by Jove—yes—the Honourable Matthew Mignette, the crack Cambridge bat. You show his lordship the telegram; maybe his valet will do the work for them in the marquee, if they are so deuced particular about their personal appearances.”

The Right Honourable Viscount Puddleton, Lord of the Manor, had succeeded to the family estates a few years previous to the period of our story, and was, as the Puddletonians described it, swimming “in silver and gold.” His lordship was a keen all-round sportsman, an enthusiastic cricketer, and if he had any faults at all it was a fondness for practical joking. He had played the very deuce in Puddleton on several occasions, and, had it not been for the fact that he was the man of

the place, would have, no doubt, been brought before the local magistrates. He it was who had covered the statue of Venus in the Market Square, which had been condemned as far too nude, in a night-dress and petticoat; and he it was and his college companions who had changed all the sign posts, and stuck "mangling and wringing done here," over the chief surgeon-dentist's doorway, and "repairs neatly executed" on the doctor's gateway. A spinster milliner's notice card—"A large amount of ladies' clothing always on view inside," was on Sunday morning found on a notorious bachelor's window-pane; whilst "A young man wanted," supplied its place. All these for a time were taken in good part, but there were not a few who said that young Lord Puddy was working to have his ears boxed.

"Eh, what did you say, Dunstan, about the Cotton Spinners? They're coming, are they not?"

"Yes, my lord, but they're anxious to get shaved and brushed up before taking the field. They've been playing, travelling, and spreeing, so far as I can make out, for a week, and I'm to conduct them to the nearest barber's on arrival. Now, there hasn't been a barber in Puddleton since old Naggles cut his throat with his own razor 'for want of a single chin to use it on,' as he said, so I thought your lordship's valet might——"

"My valet, Simpkins, shave strangers, Dunstan? Well, you're mighty ignorant of the world, or you might know that now-a-days a valet is a far greater man than his master. Why, if I suggested such a thing he'd go off in the night time, if he did not go off in a fit, and I don't want that. He's too valuable a man. Isn't he, Mat?"

"Yes, I should say if he'd only write a treatise on the 'Cause, Symptoms, and Cure of Jumps,' he'd be made family physician to the Bachelors' Club."

"Look here, I'll tell you what we'll do. Mat and I will shave them ourselves."

"You, my lord, you couldn't shave them," said the terrified secretary, starting back in alarm.

"Couldn't shave a man's beard off, why, man alive, I once clipped and singed a whole horse."

"Yes, and I shaved my sister's poodle from ears to tail, once," said the Honourable Mat, as fond of fun as his lordship.

"Yes, Dunstan, we'll do it ; you dust out old Naggles' shop as quick as you can, and get someone to rig out the old pole which is lying inside. The landlord here will supply us with some soap, hot water, razors, and things, and no mirrors, mind, or looking-glasses of any kind, for I expect these might prove dangerous. Tell Didbin that Mat, here, and I will be the 'ground' as you call it, 'professional and assistant and both in the hair cutting and shampooing trade,' and that he's to play Lord Puddleton, and keep his mouth shut, for I would not care to let the Cotton Spinners believe that I dropped my 'h's' as if they burned my tongue."

Dunstan did not know what to do, but as his position was but that of a clerk in the Puddleton estate offices, he saw no other alternative than obeying, though he trembled for the results. Only fancy Lord Puddleton handling a razor, a man who is unable to shave himself ; and the Honourable Matthew Mignette lathering men's faces as if he had been a barber's assistant all his days. The other members of the club, possibly because they dearly "lo'ed a lord," roared at the idea and seemed only too glad to give their assistance in carrying it out. Dick Didbin did not seem to relish the idea of acting the part of a lord as being from "his /experience a mighty uncomfortable position at the best of times." As he was only to be "a Life Peer of a single afternoon," he, however, consented to act as Lord Puddleton, and to do the duties of chairman at the luncheon if Mr. Dunstan would do the palavering, which he "weren't nohow up to."

In less than half an hour the whole barber's shop was swept out, the pole with the brass basin at the end of it rigged out, while a fire was lit and the old man's soap "set a-boiling." For the sake of appearances a canary and a tame blackbird were borrowed to stick in the window, and the landlord of the "Clover Leaf" having given his razors a finishing polish and lent the two worthies a couple of waiter's aprons and a pair of light cotton jackets, they took up their stations inside and awaited the coming of their customers from the railway station, whither Dunstan had gone for the purpose of escorting them to the nearest hairdresser's, as he said.

In a body they rushed into Naggles' old shop, which was not large enough to contain one half of them, and there was quite a struggle as to who was to be attended to first. The secretary

was, however, quite equal to the difficulty and suggested an adjournment to the "Clover Leaf," over the way, where they might wait for their turn one by one.

"Shaving, sir?" said the Honourable Mat, as he dipped the soapbrush into the pot of boiling soap, and applied it to the chin of the best bowler of the Cotton Spinners. There was a yell as the man jumped up with the exclamation, "You infernal idiot, do you want to scald a man to death?"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the honourable gentleman with all the urbanity of an ordinary barber, "it is a little hot, but I will soon put it all right," and so saying he filled the pot up with cold water.

Having done so, he commenced to lather the man all over from ears to eyelids, and handed him wet to the Lord of Puddleton, who, with a razor held like a pencil, did not seem to know where or how to begin. Seizing the unfortunate Cotton Picker by the nose, he made a nice salve-like sweep across the right cheek bringing away a portion of whiskers and skin, but not seemingly taking off much of the hard bristles of the four-days-old beard. Still his victim was patient, and bore the scrapes manfully, though drops of blood here and there spoke of gashes which had been made in the operation.

"You don't seem to have got hold of good razors," was his remark.

"Oh, yes, sir," said the amateur barber, "very best of Sheffield cutlery, but your beard is a little old and stiff, sir; but I think you'll do now, sir, there's clean water in a basin and a towel there alongside."

Having washed his face, the poor victim, unconscious of the fact that nearly the whole of one of his much-valued whiskers, the whiskers which his wife so much admired, the whiskers which she fell in love with, was nearly all swept away, asked for a looking-glass.

"No such thing, I'm sorry, sir, our old one was broken in pieces by an accident the day afore yesterday, but if you take my opinion, sir, you're looking uncommonly well."

"Humph," was the remark as he looked at the red stains on the towel, "all I can say is, that you're the worst scraper I ever sat under, sir. Shave! by heaven, you can, and so can an Archimedean lawn mower and a reaping machine."

All this was not very assuring to young Noogles, who was soaped chin, brow, and cheek, and whom the Honourable Mat so plastered with nipping yellow soap about the eyes, that he dare not open them to look at his friend's face. Had he done so he no doubt would have bolted into the street.

With some little experience, Lord Puddleton approached him with more confidence, but Mat had so lathered him that he really did not know where to make a beginning. The result of this was, that the right half of young Noogle's moustache came off in the first two scrapes ere he could remonstrate. Some rough sweeps across the beard and the side of the cheeks brought him off with a few cuts, and he washed his face, and went off to join his friends at the "Clover Leaf," with one side of his moustache completely scraped off, and the other left standing. The fourth man in, was not a very difficult subject to deal with, being exceedingly plain-faced, but his request to have a little off his hair seemed rather to puzzle the operators. Lord Puddleton had once, however, clipped a horse, so there could not surely be very much difficulty about docking a man. Seizing the comb and the scissors, he gathered up as much as he could, with the former, and then, with several dexterous twitches, cut the whole close to the skull, leaving a perceptibly bald piece on the scalp. A general scoop all round, a hurried scurry with the brush, and a "There you are, sir," and it was all done. But while they were at this job, a rather wary-looking gentleman had come in to get shaved, and had just undergone a thorough lathering. The cuts on the faces of his friends, the red marks on the towel, and, more than all, the novel style in which the shaver held the razor between his finger and thumb like a pen seemed to quite scare him.

"This chair, sir," said the noble barber, in the most bland and inviting tones.

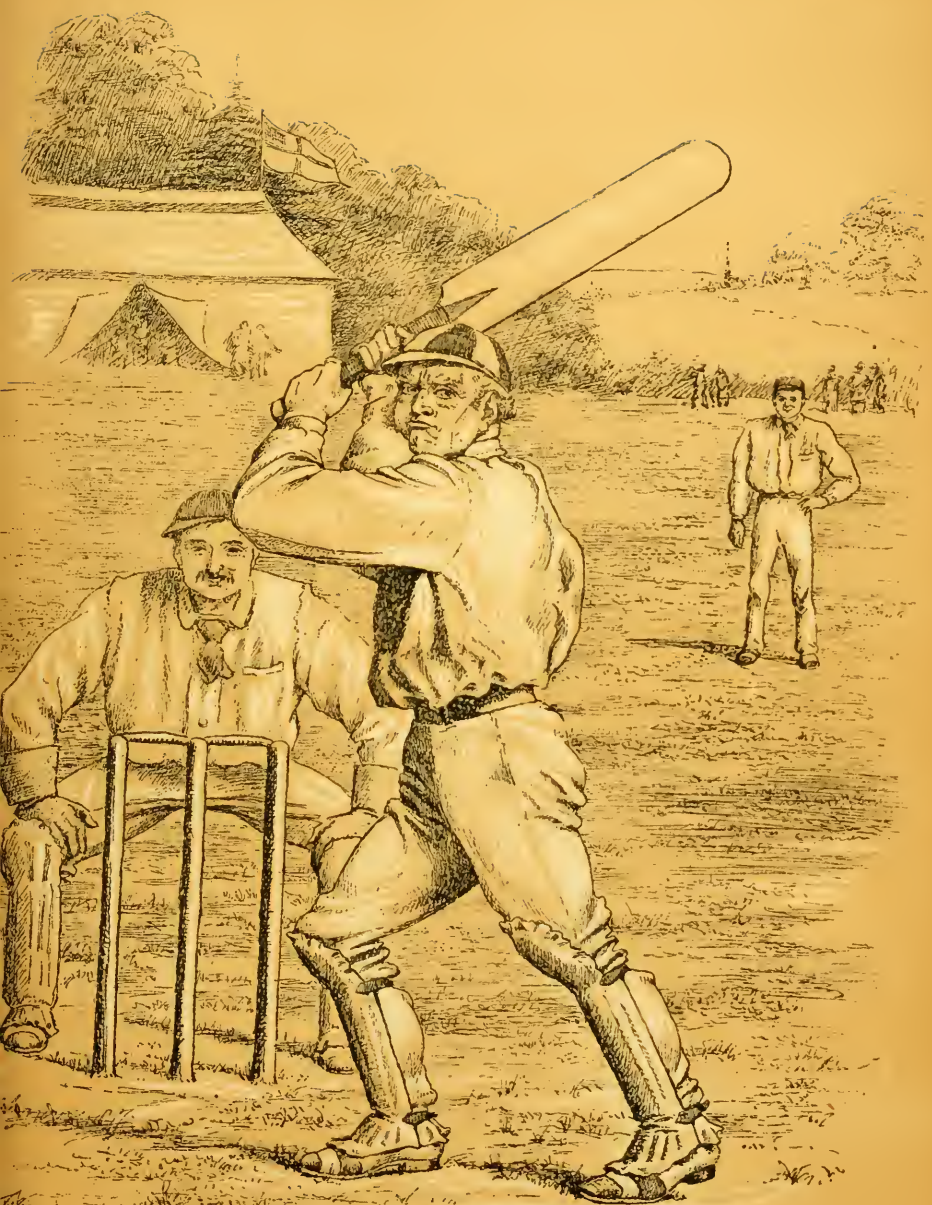
"Ah, well, no, sir," said the cautious individual, with a drawling accent, who was none other than a Yankee cotton-agent, "I guess not. I rather think the ringworm's in our family; and as it would be mighty dangerous for the fellows who come after me, I'll just wash and hang on till I'm better."

His example, if not his ringworm, seemed to be infectious, for not a single customer came forward, and the local cricketers being all anxious for play to commence, the razors and shaving pots were laid aside, and all made for the field.

The Puddleton men won the toss, and elected to bat, the Lord Puddleton Life Peer of an afternoon going in with the real Lord as professional against the bowling of the "Ringworm" individual, who had escaped, and the first man shaved. Whether it was out of sheer downright spite or not, would have been difficult to determine, but that infernal barbarous barber's wicket was not long of being shattered, and he was relieved by 'Soapbrush,' as the strangers christened him. Mat was not to lose his wicket, however, so easily, and thrashed the bowling to a fearfully hard-scoring tune. Every ten minutes the numbers were being shifted on the telegraph board, and Soapbrush had run within short distance of a treble figure, while Dick Didbin, whose mouth would not keep shut, though continually addressed as "My lord," played a careful game. In time, both men went down and after that, as the cricket reporters say, the tail fell easily.

The Cotton Spinners had to take the field and knock off 140 runs; Mat Mignette, who played as Mat Mintey, having put together 85. The No. 1 Shaved man was the first to raise his bat, the bowler being the real Lord Puddleton. The Shaver's first over was smashed in a most savage manner, and what seemed to make the batsman hit wilder than ever, was the cry every time from the crowd of, "Well hit, old Single Whisker! Go it, old Single Whisker!" Nor did it end there, for, "Go it old Scraped Face!" and "The man with the Upper Lip!" were amongst other of the salutations. Worst of all, it was most annoying to be asked if there was a barber in Bobbinstown, or if they had only a peculiar style of cutting their hair and shaving themselves.

At the end of the single innings match, the Cotton Spinners were defeated by 50 runs, and without much loss of time made their way to the station, not carrying, as may be imagined, a very fair countenance. Dick Didbin, with a tongue no longer under a ban, accompanied them to the station, shaking hands and conversing with them all. "He had no more pride," said one, "than if he had only been one of ourselves." How the match ended is best explained by a letter from the Bobbinsville secretary to Mr. Dunstan as read aloud at the "Clover Leaf," three days afterwards, by the Honourable Mat Mignette:—



"Go it old Single Whisker!"

see page 46.



“BOBBINSVILLE,

“Thursday.

“My dear Sir,

“We got home all right, and were well pleased with our day at Puddleton, all save Bill Snookins, and Sam Sellers, and Joe Wilson, in fact nearly all of them save Yankee Dansken (the Doodle, we call him here), who stood at slip. No fault of yours, my dear boy, but of those infernal professionals of yours, who do know something about cricket, but nothing about their real business, shaving. Bill Snookins, our best bowler, was so disgusted at the appearance of one of his whiskers when he first saw himself in a glass, that he had both shaved clean off. This was easy enough, but when he went home to his wife, who is a little short-sighted, she refused to let him in, and, when he did get in again, had to lie all night on the sofa. Next day three of us attended to swear that it was Bill, but she seems to be of opinion that the real Bill has still to turn up. As to Sam Sellers, the young woman he was engaged to has chucked him over on account of his having lost one of his moustaches. If ever he catches that infernal shaver again, he swears he will make him swallow his razors ; while as to Soapsuds, he'll make it as hot for him about the eyes as he did with his brush.

“Lord Puddleton every man swears by, though at the station refreshment-room he was going to fight some of us for calling him “My lord,” and said he was just a plain son of a slut like the rest of us.

“Hoping you are well,

“I am, yours—”

“Hilloah, here is Didbin,” said Lord Puddleton, waking up. “So you didn’t like ‘playin’ Lord,’ did you, eh?”

“No more I didn’t, my lord, and if ever you get me at that game again, may I be where the parson says ‘the wickets cease from troubling, and the weary is at rest.’ Yes, blow me, rather than be a-bowed to and a-scraped to, I’d rather, my lord, yes, I would, I’d rather have my beard grow six times a day and have you and the ‘Onerable Mister Soapsuds as my barber. ‘Enceforth, Richard Didbin, if he plays for Puddleton, plays as ‘The Ground.’ ”

WILD DUCK SHOOTING ON THE BORDER.



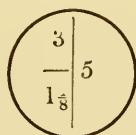
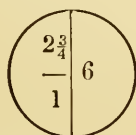
TRETTING down to the Solway between Criffel and the lower range of hills which, finishing in Cairntable, divide Ayrshire from the Galloways, are here and there, every half a dozen miles, long lying valleys, the lakes and rivers of which are the favourite resorts of wild fowl of all kinds in winter. The chief of these valleys is possibly that of the Dee, a totally different river, however, from that which rises amongst the Cairngorm mountains, and flows through Kincardineshire and Aberdeenshire, the sister river of the Don, and not so much favoured for fertility as for fish, as an old couplet says :—

Except it be for fish or tree,
Ae mile o' Don's worth twa o' Dee.

The Kirkcudbrightshire Dee in its upper career passeth through no fewer than three wide lochs, Loch Ken being the principal, and these, with lochs from which tributaries flow, such as Lochinvar (not to be confounded with Loch Inver in the far north), and the banks of and islands on them, are favourite hatching places of ducks, or, as the natives pronounce it, "jucks." It was not, therefore, to be wondered at that, in answer to my question, "What have you got to shoot?" in response to the usual wind-up Galloway invitation to "bring my gun," I should receive the reply, "A' things, but particularly 'jucks.'" My friend was just jumping into the train for Dumfries, from which station he would have to change into one for Castle Douglas, and as the guard blew his whistle he repeated the invitation more warmly—"Lots of rabbit, and plenty of other game, and with this frost the burns will just be full of jucks, and there's any amount o' snipe."

"And I could not want better," I said to myself, "in the middle of December. Hang the punt business, I'm sick of it!" and so I was heartily, for I had been skulking about the marshes at the mouth of the Leven, which empties the surplus water of Loch Lomond into the Clyde between Bowling and Dumbarton, till I had all that feeling that must belong to a sewer-rat. Lots of rabbits, lots of snipe, and lots of wild duck in the burns—

what could a man want more? Going home, I looked in at my gunmaker's, where I ordered a couple of hundred "Green Eley Twelve" empty shells, with as much powder and shot wads as would fill them, the shot, of course, being of different numbers, as the shooting was to be very mixed. Save pigeon shots, sportsmen do not care for the trouble of filling their own cartridges; but having all the requisite gear, and being fond of filling up idle moments at the work, I have always made a point of doing so myself. You can't smoke with safety, of course, when filling, but when the powder canisters have been removed you may enjoy a nice pipe turning down the rims. The cartridges filled by the gunmakers are, as a rule, of course, reliable, but you have as great confidence in yourself when working with your own ammunition as when working with your own weapons. "I have tied that fly, myself," we have heard a man say when playing a fish, "and know what I am working with." Had anything gone wrong the tacklemaker would certainly have come in for it. Getting to work, I soon turned out the lot, marking on the outside of the wads, which I prefer blank to suit my purpose, the amount of powder, and number and amount of shot in this style:—



and so on, the top figure of the fraction representing the drachms of powder, the bottom the ounces of shot, and the side one the number of the shot. Of course, for ordinary shooting, such as at grouse or partridges, you do not need to be so careful; but for mixed shooting in December, when you may change and re-change cartridges without firing, according to the chances you think you are likely to get, it is of great advantage to have all your cartridges fully marked. This was on a Friday night, and, having turned in the rims of all, I smoked a pipe as I looked over the gun in my case, saw that the breech action was working smoothly, the locks all right, and the "plungers" returning when freed by the rebounding locks, a matter of importance, the spiral springs on which they act, especially after you have been out on marshes, being very liable to go wrong. I then

brewed myself what might be called a sportsman's tumbler, and retired. Waking next morning, I found that Jack Frost, who had been flirting with the weather for a few days, had firmly established his suit, all the windows being "wreathed up" most fantastically, while the atmosphere in the room was cold enough to make anyone draw back 'neath the blankets and sing—

Up in the mornin's no for me,
Up in the mornin' early ;
Up in the mornin's no for me,
I'm sure it's winter fairly.

To make up my mind, fling the clothes back, and rush to my tub was the work of a moment, and after the first shock from the water, on which was a thin skin of ice, felt as warm as if I had been transferred to a Turkish bath. Fit for anything was the form I felt in, and the only pang I had was that I would not be able to enjoy to the full my friend's invitation, and that grand, good, old roaring game, the curling. "Still," I reasoned wisely, "there will not be much more shooting worth anything after Christmas, and we may have some good strong ice in January and February, so I'll leave others to have a twist at the 'jucks,' the snipe, and the rabbits when it is going." Getting through my letters, I soon found my way to the train, and after a five hours' ride, including one spent at Dumfries in the company of some frozen-out coursers of that "leash-loving" county, I saw my host outside on a dog-cart, peering into the carriages of the train as it whirled into the little station where it was arranged he should meet me.

"Ye have brought your gun wi' ye, I hope?" was his eager remark.

"Yes, and as much ammunition as would serve the whole British army."

"I'm glad o' that, for the jucks are jist swarming—see, man, there they go," he said; "they're going down from Loch Dee to ma burns, and they'll feed on the diseased pitaties, man, for I've laid down bagfuls o' them all down the burns, and they come from all places for them. But we'll hurry on, and when they're gettin' the tea ready we'll have a shot."

"By all means," was my reply. "Let's have a shot at them; for if you don't get me one, I'll think of nothing else the whole

Sabbath day, and I suppose it wouldn't do to have a blaze at them to-morrow?"

"We have done worse many a time," was his canny remark, "but with less noise, ye ken. Guns are no safe to work wi' on the Sabbath. However, here we are at the road end, and when you have had a wee bit dram after your drive, we'll see what we can make of them." Throwing the reins to a stout young fellow who rushed from the stables, my host, who was a strong, burly, big, Kirkcudbrightshire farmer, led me by the arm inside, where blazed a rousing fire, the glow of which was reflected from the tea-things, specially laid, I could observe, for my reception, and, getting out the bottle and some glasses from a cupboard, poured out a "caulker" of as good Scotch as ever the distiller's worm worked in. In the next few seconds I slipped the gun out of its cover, having left the case at home for sake of handiness, my host took down from a rack in the lobby a twelve-bore, by a local maker, which, he said, was responsible for more ducks than any other gun on Solway Side, "Jock Johnstone's Mons Meg included." Jock's Meg was a big punt "swivel," and was so named from the tradition that Threave Castle, situated in the immediate vicinity, was the place where that well-known piece of ordnance which looks down on Princes Street from Edinburgh Castle was manufactured. Passing through the centre of his steading, and crossing a field at the far edge of which we could see against the red of the sinking sun a straggling row of trees, he whispered to me that we would better keep the "jucks" between ourselves and the light, certainly a very wise precaution, considering the dusk. "Now, be verra quiet," was his remark, "I hear them in the burn just where it comes out of the milldam." Having loaded the chambers, I cocked both hammers, and closed up quickly, my companion doing the same. Just as the red glare of the sun on the icy fringes of the burn came into view, away went a whole flock with a squatter. In mid-air they were against the red glare of the sun and as quick as my finger could slip from right to left trigger I had an unmistakable brace on the left.

"Well, I'm good for a couple, I think," was my remark.

"I'm sure o' the auld drake," was his response, "but I'll no sweer to anither, as they crossed the shadow o' that auld larch tree. I'm hanged if I dinna cut it after this, for I've lost a shot before through it."

The old drake, however, and three dead ducks were laid in the grassfield beyond the burn, which had a hedge on the far side, and the larch-tree was saved. This was quite good enough for an evening's work, and, having my shooting appetite so far whetted, I began to think of my bodily wants. The savoury odour of ham and eggs, and their frizzling sound in the frying-pan, as my host opened the kitchen-door to give some parting words to his housekeeper, had set my teeth on edge. So we found our way back. The "touzie tea," the great meal of Scottish sportsmen who have been out either on a coursing, a curling, or a shooting expedition, was done ample justice to, and so was the toddy in the evening. Cattle-shows were discussed, old coursing meetings re-coursed, curling matches re-curved, till it was long past the time to retire. Sunday morning saw the frost as keen and bold as ever, and there was no doubt as to the fact that we were going to be in for a tack of it. A drive to the little parish kirk, where the parson re-dished an old sermon to about a score of shivering hearers, a walk through the fields, and an inspection of the prize animals, slipped us over the "Sawbath," and on Monday we were up early for the campaign. The mill-dam had, of course, to be visited first, and we rushed forward to the burn-edge, as we had done on Saturday night.

Bang! went the first barrel of my gun at a duck as it rose two feet from the water, and down it went like a pigeon newly shot over a trap. I was looking about for a second, when I heard my host give a roar of a laugh.

"You've settled that ane, any way. Ha, ha, he, he! Baith fished and shot."

"What do you mean?"

"Weel, don't ye see, man, it's hookit on a fish-hook, just like a trout, ye ken."

At this moment up rushed the young fellow who had taken charge of the gig-pony on the Friday night, and the tone of my host's merriment was changed to one of anger.

"Did I no' tell you that ye were no' to lift any jucks on the Sawbath Day, that the folk were talkin' about it?"

"Neither a did, sir," was the reply; "but I thocht it would be nae sin to set the traps."

I was laughing at his idea o. what he constituted Sawbath-breaking, when he jumped into the burn, and brought back the



You're settled that one any way
Ha ha, ha, ha!

see page 52.

duck which had swallowed a fish-hook baited with wheat, the line being made fast to a large stone. It was, no doubt, a cruel style of capture, but I was assured it was a most effective one. Two dead ducks, caught in ordinary rabbit-traps, were also brought to land, having sprung the plate when gobbling for the wheat. Taking him with us as our guide and bag-carrier, for he knew all the points where he had laid down the decayed potatoes, we soon had a volley at thirty yards' rise at five which sprang out of a burn on our approach. Three fell, while a fourth went away, hard hit. Disturbed by the noise, a lot of teal rose further down, but, circling round, settled in another stream to our right. We crossed the, fields setting up and knocking over a hare in our progress, without rising them. When they did get up we had three of the nicely-plumaged little birds, but got made a fool of soon afterwards by a Jack Snipe. Dodging from meadow to meadow and taking snipe when they came in our way, we soon made up a heavy bag, and when the ferrets were brought out in the afternoon for some work in the hedgerows, I had reason to congratulate myself on my success. Two days more of it, and I was glad to give up the gun for the besom and the channel-stone, and enjoy that game of all northern games—curling.



MY FIRST FOURSOME.



FAST Days are not now so difficult to spend in Scotland as they used to be. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," but all work and a more than ordinary allowance of preaching is apt to make him kick his heels over the traces altogether. So the parson has of late lost his influence so far as holidays are concerned, and with much reason, for if a hard-worked artisan is to have a full holiday, let him spend it with his family, enjoying the fresh air in the country, and not in the musty, fusty, atmosphere of churches, which are, as a rule, damp and badly ventilated, listening, or rather, wearing the attitude of an attentive listener, to some most unpalatable discourse—for if there is a thing thinner than a Scotch Fast Day dinner, it is a Fast Day sermon. Not that we would advise a working-man to go down the Clyde in a steamer, *drink, dance and return delirious*, but that he should do so decorously, giving his wife and children a treat that would make them think more of the world and its blessings. Practical kindnesses go quicker home to the heart than ill-preached Scripture. He is but a half-souled individual, who would compare for a moment the smiling pictures of health and happiness with the canting faces of the hypocrites who cannot see reason for rejoicing in anything. The working-man has long ago settled the question in his own mind, and the parson has so far lost his power. As to the middle classes, it is long, indeed, since they determined to make it a holiday. At the time which the little reminiscence I am about to relate commences, the church bells were better responded to than now, and folks, more especially the middle-aged, remained at home, letting the young ones rush off to the coast, to Edinburgh, or Lochlomond, according to the bent of their fancy, or the facilities afforded by the railway companies or river steamboat owners. Anxious to avoid the crowds which I knew would be

everywhere but at Glasgow, I had resolved as I journeyed home to lay in a stock of good cigars, some choice books, draw down the blinds, and remain inside till the day was over. It was neither a very bad nor a very good resolution, but I could not be bothered studying where to go, the spirit of hesitancy hung over me, and, feeling utterly unable to make up my mind, it was wise policy to do nothing. A slight headache at the time would have been welcome. I would have consulted myself, resolved that I was indisposed, and not in a safe condition to go away from home, and so ended the matter. But it was determined otherwise.

As I walked up Renfield Street, mechanically buying my paper, and envying the happiness of the hot, rushing youth who, bag in hand, marched impetuously to the railway station, I had my arm caught by Dr. M'Savinclaus, the oldest and most experienced writer in Glasgow—one who had been made a doctor much against his own mind, for degrees, he would tell you, were now-a-days dangerously cheap.

"Weel, where are you for the morn?" said the Doctor in his Doric.

I explained that I meant to stay at home, at which he held up his hands in astonishment.

"At hame! Bless me, waste a guid spring day in the kirk! Hoots, hoots, come alang wi' me the morn and I'll put you richt."

"Did ye ever play gowff?" he continued.

"No," I answered; "though I have tried in a small way—I mean I have never played a real genuine game."

"The sooner you are launched the better," was his parting remark at the corner. "It's a good game. Meet me at the end of the Broomielaw Brig the morn's mornin' at eight o'clock. Good night."

"Good night," I said, "I'll meet you, certain."

Golf at that time had not the hold on the country it has at the present moment, and the only place where golf was known was in the suburbs of the ancient village of Powburn, where I was to play next day. Now it is a game played all over the country—from Aberdeen to Devonshire, from North Berwick to Machrohanish in Argyllshire. Ardeer has its links, and then—

Have you a pain in your back—
Have you a pain ava?
Set oot on the golfing track
And the wind will drive them awa.
Driver and putter and cleek,
Cleek and putter and spoon,
If you wish to spend a happy week
Get on to the links at Troon.

Next morning—a nice clear spring morning—we met at the end of the Broomielaw Brig, the Doctor, with a tweed jacket and a tweed cap, looking as cheerful as a lintie. People were hurrying along, as steamboat whistles were whistling and steamboat bells were ringing. “This way for Rothesay,” was the call. “Here you are for Arrochar,” was the rejoinder. But we replied to all in vain—we were on for the gowff.

It was not without some little difficulty that we succeeded in procuring our tickets next morning at a well-known station now almost dismantled on the South Side. The crowd was all but impassable. Shouts came from Jock, and shrieks from Jenny, and women seized children by the hair of the head in true Scotch fashion, and dragged them upstairs to the platform, where porters shoved them about as rudely as they would sheep at a cattle tryst. The difficulty of securing seats was only greater than that experienced in securing tickets, and just as the whistle was blown the porter shoved a full family of five upon the top of us.

“Only the inconveniences of a Glasgow holiday,” said my good-natured friend, who seemed to enjoy the thing as he picked one of the little ones up and placed her on his knee, a proceeding which at once removed the timorous expression of the mother, who seemed afraid evidently that she had been intruding on the company of “big folk,” though it had not been her fault, good woman, that she had been thrust into a first-class compartment instead of a third. They were a douce, happy, deserving couple, on their way to see the old folks, the husband’s father being a country ploughman, who had not yet been blessed with a sight of his first grandson, a young thing in the mother’s arms. At the fourth wayside station they got out, after thanking us kindly, and showing us that there is plenty of good strong “grit,” respectability, and homely manner

in the Glasgow artisan, whatever may be said against him in the matter of strikes and other disputes with employers about hours and wages. "It's a good deal better to see the lad take his wife into the fresh air with his family," said the Doctor, "than sit mewling in a church pew preached at like a colley puppy that's been first tried on sheep. He'll go back wi' fresh hope to his wark in the mornin', and the auldest of the bairns will talk about the outing for days to come. In fact it will form one of their first pleasant memories to be recalled—ay, maist vividly in their auldest days—besides, it's a treat to the auld folks."

"It's a pity the church folks can't see it in that light, Doctor."

"Oh, man, it disna pay them tae see it in that licht, no that I rin doon the church. You'll aye find, however, that the kirk is not sae often filled with the crack preacher who is six days removed from his flock, as by the man who sets a good example, always takes a pairt in a' their enjoyments and sports, and shows himself to be as fond of honest legitimate worldly pleasures as other people. You'll see ane of this kind the day, fond of a gude, dry joke, a guid dinner, a timely dram, and fit to beat the deevil himself at the deevil's ain game, for he's the best whist-player in the neighbourhood. He dis'na fricht them wi' ower lang sermons. Twenty minutes' guid advice, fresh and hot, tells better on his congregation: he's great at a baptism, claims the first dance at the wedding, and always sees that the people do not drink too much at funerals. Theology he leaves to those who choose to dash their heads against it, like newly-catched larks in a cage—it has broke the hardest skulls before, and will no doot dae't again. But, heigho! am preachin' myself; here we are at the station."

We were heartily welcomed by the Vicar, as my friend always designed him, a hale, healthy old fellow, with a fresh roast-beef complexion, a merry eye, a bold chin nestling in a thin grey beard. A piece of white tie revealed itself behind a black waistcoat, over which was a shooting-jacket of grey shepherd tartan. He was of spare build, but no doubt of whipcord muscle.

"I wonder to see you, James, man, here on a Fast Day," was his first remark, accompanied by a short laugh or keckle.

"Ay, as if I was na' expecit. Ye tak very good care, John,

never to take up a freen's poopit in a Glasgow Fast, there's ower much fun here on that day."

The Vicar laughed, and led the way to the manse, in the comfortable interior of which we enjoyed a toothful of a whiskey not to be got every day—a present from the distiller himsel'.

"Ay, and hoo dae we play? Does your freen play?" was his remark as he turned to me.

"Not a stroke; never handled a club in his life," said the Doctor, "but the sooner he learns the better. But how will you make sides, eh? You and I can about hold our own, but——"

"Oh, you and ma freen here will play Donald and me, and we'll give you a couple of strokes to the hole."

"Donald I'm afraid's busy at work on the glebe, but——"

"Just cry over Donald, and nae nonsense. I'll no play my ball wi' ony ither man this day."

Though the Doctor had said I had never handled a club in my life he knew otherwise, for I had played several singles, and knocked my ball about promiscuously over the links of an east country town, and had considerable practice in putting, at which I was considered to be more than usually skilful for a novice. With two strokes to the hole, therefore, we were thought a fair match, unless, indeed, Donald should prove a demon at the game. The Doctor shook hands with the old Beadle most heartily, and the latter of course was helped in Scotch fashion to a dram. "Gled to see ye loking sae weel, Doctor, the green is in gran' order; there's no much win', and I don't think the links will be too thickly crowded." Walking down to the club-house the Vicar got out his sticks, the Beadle having brought his with him from his house when summoned. A set which was not in common use was procured for the writer, and we proceeded to the teeing ground, where were the caddies, always quiet and attentive when the Vicar, who formed one of the set, placed the balls. The Beadle drove off first, and in a style which excited my envy; for he took it clean and clever, and had the satisfaction of seeing it roll clear of all dangerous bunkers. I "swiped" off, determined to do as well, but to my own surprise missed it altogether. Much discomfited I stood back as the Vicar stepped into my place, telling me not to swipe so hard, *and be careful not to rise my heels from the ground.* His drive



13/10/1874

"as I scratched my head
over my clumsiness

was quite as successful as the Beadle's, rolling a little beyond it, and the Doctor played the like.

It was my turn next to play "one more," and with the short spoon I determined to be most cautious, and with caution I was successful.

"Well done!" said my clerical friend, kindly. "Don't be too anxious; we stand well for this hole yet."

He had, however, to play two more, but laid his ball well on to the putting green with a nice, clean shot.

Donald had now to play "one of two," and chose his putter, which he used most cleverly, laying his ball almost "dead."

It was now my turn to show my skill; but, alas! I was nervous. I meant to send the ball 15 yards, and only moved it 15 inches.

"I am afraid our chance is gone, now," said my partner, as I scratched my head over my clumsiness, "but I'll try." He cleared the ground a little, and then rapped his ball smartly and evenly. It rolled over the little hillock, round the little basin, and down within a few inches of the little hole.

The Doctor played carefully and well, and, holing his ball, won.

Beautifully the Vicar started off with a swinging swipe, the second time clearing the bold sand bunker, in which I saw myself, while he shook his club, hammering in vain.

The Doctor was not so successful, his ball catching the top of the bank and rolling back.

"We're out of it this time, Donald," said the Doctor.

"Weel I wat, sir," said the Beadle, cautiously; "but we'll do our best for a hauff." Playing cannily with his iron, he lifted the ball with a neat cuff over the summit in a style which called forth all our loudest encomiums. It was a daring shot, let alone a clever one, and Donald well deserved his praise.

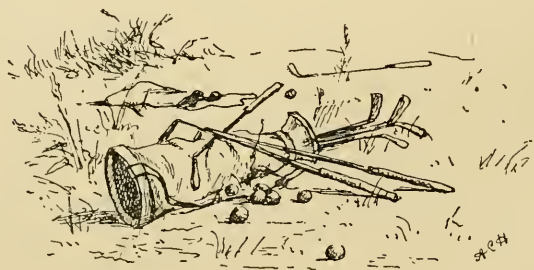
Getting over, we found the Doctor had to play the odds, which he did most deftly with his cleek, for he was a clever hand at the short game. I played one off, and we found ourselves on the green in two, and everything in our favour. The Vicar, however, had to play the like, which he did so as to remain undoubtedly dead that the Doctor lifted his ball, for we could have beat him without the odds most easily.

The sun was now shining out with a strong noontide glare, which tempered slightly the bracing breeze. The muscles of our back sinews were beginning to crack, our breasts to distend,

and we felt the full glow of health warm our cheeks ; for golf is indeed one of the most health-giving of all pastimes, one of the safest, one of the least expensive, and one of the very best.

Our third hole was along the line of the sea, and with the wind I drove off this time clear and fair, and received the praise of my partner. The Beadle chose a different line, and though he did not drive so far, I found that he lay better, for he knew every sand-scape and whin-bush in the ground. The Vicar was called upon to use his sand-iron, which he did most deftly ; and we went on our way rejoicing, the Doctor playing the like with equal success. The hole was halved with the aid of the handicap allowance, and on we went again. So ran the course until the last hole, which, after splendid driving and some beautiful short play, was won by the writer and the Vicar, who, however, lost the next round, in which they were only allowed a stroke to each hole.

Need it be said that our Glasgow Fast-day was wound up most happily in the manse, where many a good old medal competition was re-golfed over the toddy, and the day altogether much better put in than in Glasgow with the blinds down !



WITH THE ROD ON LOCH LOMOND.

“HE sun has gane doon ower the Lofty Ben Lomond,” sings one of our party, as we sit in the main room of the hotel at Balloch, and look out upon the Queen of Scottish Lakes, and the slow-running Leven, which carries off its surplus waters to the Clyde ; but, in truth, the sun has gone down in a totally different direction, for the Lofty “Ben” lies to the north-east of us. Poor Tannahill, the most charming of Scottish song-writers, Burns included, sang of his Jessie, the Flower of Dunblane, from the hills of Renfrewshire, and saw the brow of the favourite, if not the loftiest of Scottish mountains, in his walks at sunset away against the gilded horizon ; while, sad to think, he never knew the scenic beauties of the loch beneath, or the Braes of Balquither, which he celebrated in one of his most popular lyrics. Further up the loch we cannot get this evening, and so we settle down to make a night of it with what Burns calls “sangs and clatter,” the “clatter,” or “jabber,” which is good English (or is it Irish ?) for the same word, consisting of hard bouncing about big fish and big baskets, finishing up with an exhibition “o’ the wonderful wee flee that did it”—this production of the flee that did it being considered as evidence which cannot well be rebutted. But it matters not ; the biggest fish that ever were caught are those that *escaped*—if an Irish bull may be here perpetrated ; the biggest bags of grouse those that are shot after they are eaten ; and the biggest fences that are ever jumped in a long hunting run are those which have grown hard and high during the few hours between the time they were crossed and the post-prandial cigar in the evening. Of course it is needless to state that every angler swears that there is no sport like fishing, just as every golfer claims that golf is the finest game in the world and far before cricket, and so on, the “knurrist and spellist” possibly putting in his claim for his favourite pastime, whatever it may be like. So we sung the “Bonnie red hackle” for a change from the

"Bonnie woods of Craigielea," and the praises of the sport by loch and river generally.

They may sing o' their gunning, and a' ither funning,
 But give us the rod when the water's in ply;
 When the wind wi' a swirl it puts on the right pirl,
 And whirls off full nicely the bonnie bit fly.
 Wi' the best o' guid tackle, a hare-lug or hackle,
 Or maybe by times the wing o' a teal,
 Or something kenspeckle that makes our hearts keckle,
 When a trout sings a bonnie bit tune on the reel.

Sae wading and swinging, our line we are flinging,
 Of care we ne'er have a thought, man, awa;
 We re gay weel content aye, when fish they are plenty,
 Wi' a rise now and then to ilka bit thrav.
 Though could be the watter, it disna e'en matter,
 We couldna be better; we ne'er were sae weel;
 There's a drap in the flask yet, a trout in the basket,
 And anither is playing a tune on the reel.

So awa wi' your yachting, your bowling, your batting,
 Awa wi' your hunting, your coaching, and a';
 We'll na have your racing, or e'en steeplechasing,
 Your quoinin', your curling, your games wi' the ba';
 E'en for a week's sailing we'd no gie a grayling,
 Or e'en gie a saumont for ship, mast, and keel;
 Wi' plenty of fishing, nae mair we are wishing
 Than a bonnie bit tune, man, betimes on the reel.

But late to bed and late to sup, makes a long lie and a slow get up; and so there is a general rush for candles just as McVicar commences that story which we all have heard so often, and know the length of. Familiarly known as the "Yawner," it starts in the Scotch style—"If any of ye ever happened to fish the Clyde at Abingdon, ye would ken,"—and then follows an account of an adventure with a Clyde trout as big as a Clyde-built ship, which, of course, was never landed and weighed. The would-be story-teller took the hint, and one and all retired, hoping for a favourable fishing morning and good luck.

Breakfast over by eight next morning, we found our way across the wooden bridge which spans the Leven, and, crossing the railway, passed down to the pier, which is about 300 yards

or so from the railway station. In due time the Glasgow train steamed in, with, of course, a crowd of tourists on board, all for the Highlands, bound either inland by Loch Katrine and the Trossachs, seaward by Loch Long, or away across to Inverary by coach, and thence to Oban, from which place they can, of course, get into any part of the north-west of Scotland. Keeping the right side of the loch as far as Balmaha, we leave the picturesque residence where was reared Smollett, the novelist, and, skirting the lovely island of Inchmurrin, have a view to the right of Buchanan Castle, the residence of the Duke of Montrose, and of his Grace's private training grounds. From Balmaha we steam to the left through a narrow pass, and in past the island of Inchtavannach, where our eyes are gladdened by the sight of a good-sized trout being lifted into a boat by the landing-net. We pass almost across the water in which Sir James Colquhoun, together with his head keeper and four others, were drowned ten years ago on returning from a deer-shooting expedition to the island of Inchloanig. The gloom of that disaster hung for a long time round these lovely wooded shores—in fact, it has scarcely yet lifted away. The lovely-situated mansion—from the drawing-room window which faces us, the Queen had one of her first and most impressive views of the lake and Ben Lomond—we can see through the trees, and in amongst the dark yews discern the little mortuary chapel, where we recollect seeing the late baronet laid to rest that wild, wet, windy day in the Christmas week of 1873. But we are soon at Luss, on the little pier at which are assembled many fishers, most of whom report as to having experienced fair sport. Our cry, however, is “Northward ho!” for we mean to fish the upper side of the Loch. Rowardennan, at the foot of the mountain, is our next stoppage, but the “Row,” or Ferry, is not a great fishing point; so, after gazing at the “Ben,” and the beautiful lodge of Rowardennan, occupied by Mr. Mair, of London, at its foot, the more wildly-situated lodge of the Ptarmigan, tenanted by Mr. Alston, but which, when we last fished the shore, was occupied by Sir Beaumont and Lady Dixie—who took a good many fish out of the waters—we get to Tarbet, on the other side, then cross again to find ourselves at our rendezvous at Inversnaid, with our boats and boatmen awaiting us. As we have had a nice “snack” on board the steamer, we lose no time in getting to

work, the best part of the day, of course, being well gone by this time. As the boatmen know exactly what *is* taking, we are soon spinning the coin for choice of guides, one of these worthies being known not only as a champion at working the oars, but as a keen and successful fisher, who knows the whole geography of the upper stretches. We win—take our seats, and are soon, with pipes aglow and a trolling-rod astern, making for the Dumbarton side, leaving our companions to whip the troubled water underneath the fall at the boat's landing-place.

"They might as well fish in an old coal-pit for Finnan haddies," is the remark of Donald, "there's no ane in the place but has had its mouth jagged by somebody."

Donald, however, was scarcely right this time, for in a minute or two afterwards we saw clearly one of our friends, who was fishing from the bow, hook a trout, and the boatman safely take it on board with the landing-net.

"He maun either have been a fule o' a fish, or ane that has come in to feed at the freshet, for there's a lot of water coming over the falls from last night's rains," was his further remark; "but here ye are at the other side, gentlemen, and I'se warrant ye'll get fish here if they are to be got in the Loch."

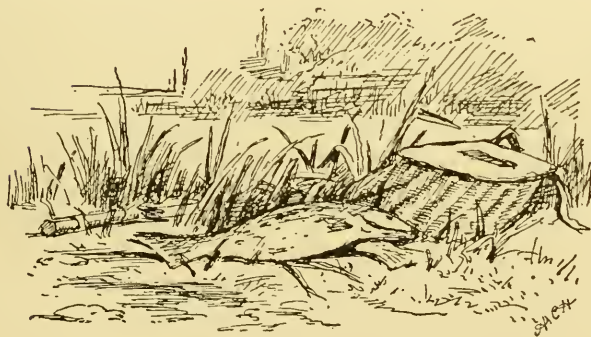
Reeling up the trolling-rod, as the water was shallow and the bottom rough, we let out our lines, and commence flinging from bow to stern, as our boatman, with his eye over his left shoulder, pulls with easy strokes from off the land.

"Just missed him, sir; he's a good fish; be canny and try again," is his caution; "it's the green and teal he's after, I'll wager."

In the third cast I cross the water he broke, and, *whirr*—have him. A good fish, too, and no mistake, so must handle him cautiously. In he sweeps almost under the boat, while Donald backs water, and off on the other side; but he comes gently up to the reel, and, after one little squirm, finds himself in the landing-net carefully handled by the Highland boatman. Two or three more drifts in and out of the same bay, and we set off further up the Loch again to more likely ground. A sea-trout gives us some fun, and as night's shadows cast themselves across the Loch we pull homewards in convoy, having for our share thirteen fish—scaling the full basket $5\frac{1}{2}$ lbs—by no means

bad work for a short day, our friends scarcely being so lucky by about a pound.

With the harvest moon shining out red on the Loch below, and the waterfall purring away as it did when Rob Roy was accustomed to bridge the torrent by leaping from rock to rock, we enjoy a nightcap of our landlord's favourite blend, determining to have a long day's work before the sun sets next evening.



A DAY'S ROOK-SHOOTING.



ABOUT this time of the year, the middle of the month of May, as the shades of darkness gather down slowly and the last streaks of the setting sun fade gradually away in the western horizon, those who have the good fortune to live in old country mansions in a woodland district will hear in the silence of eventide the faint cawing of rooks from their homes in the old rookeries close at hand. It is the voices of the young ones, now subjects of anxious care to their mothers as they swing in their cradles, to the night breeze on the tops of the elm, the hornbeam, or on the boughs of the more pliant ash tree or larch pine. Since the beginning of March Mrs. Crow has, indeed, had an anxious time of it. The old house has had to undergo the customary "spring cleaning;" fresh twigs have had to be added to make it more comfortable and secure, and new carpets have to be laid down in the shape of wool, some gathered from off the thorny hedges, and some direct from the sheep's back, where madam may have been seen perched by the shepherd, working as unconcernedly as if she were looking for worms in a newly-turned furrow in wake of the plough. In time she is forced to stay at home, and save for two hurried flights, one in the morning and one in the evening, to the nearest field of young wheat, she never leaves the eggs of green and mottled black, which lie snug in their beds of wool. Then comes an interesting event, and Master Crow looks down from his perch above the nest, to see five or six hungry beaks opening upwards, and is reminded of his duty as a parent. How he feeds them, or how he feeds himself, is a vexed question, the farmers contending that he is nothing more than a thief at the best; whilst naturalists hold that he does more good than harm in cleaning the land of grubworm and other pests of the soil. Possibly he deserves a few grains of wheat out of every bushel sown, and *that* the farmer should allow for when he measures out his seed; as no one who has watched him following in wake of the plough can doubt that he

works for his living, or rather, to use a vulgarism, "earns his grub." Yet, too many of them in a district is not desirable, so with the merry month of May comes the rook's day of sorrows. The young ones have been envying the old ones, and wishing to try their wings; and on the first nice, calm, sunshiny day hop on to the top of the nest, and then venture out on to the branches. Occasionally some poor unfortunate is just a little too early for his feathers, and tumbles on to the ground, never to fly again; but as a rule the parents succeed in getting them on the wing by degrees.

It was when numerous young ones were hopping about on the branches round their nest, that my friend the Laird of Blackstone asked me over to have a few quiet shots at them with the rook rifle, at his place close at hand in a northern county.

"We are going to have the whole parish—farmers, carpenters, blacksmiths, and all, even to the village dominie—over next day for their annual blaze, and you and I may as well have a few quiet pops at them with the bullet before; for I can't fancy shooting them sitting with shot; it is anything but sport."

Quite agreeing with him as to rook-shooting being anything but sport when the fowling-piece is used, I looked out my little breechloading rook rifle, made by a well-known London maker, and getting out a few cartridges, pinned an envelope to a tree and stuck an ordinary No. 12 gun wad, blackened with ink, in its centre. Stepping back forty paces, I tried five cartridges, and on going up found that I had put three shots on the envelope, but above the wad, the other two being just outside the rim of the envelope, but also above. Going back again I tried five more, aiming an inch or so below the wad, and found that I succeeded in making a good pattern with the whole lot, round and *on* the black centre. I now thoroughly knew my weapon, and I would advise no one to go out rook-shooting with the rifle unless he has "sighted" it carefully himself. If he does not, he may fire away all day, and never kill a single rook, as he will be unable to find out whether the rifle is throwing high or low, or right or left.

In the afternoon I found my way by a short route across country to the appointed trysting-place, and in a few minutes my friend and I entered the rookery together. Scarcely had we done so than our ears were deafened with the clanging noise of the alarmed and indignant occupants. The old birds rose from

their nests, and with a long succession of screaming caws soared away high up in the air, where they wheeled and twisted about right and left, sometimes descending low enough to take a look—in many cases a last fond look—at their offspring, which jumped from the nests into the branches in a manner which plainly said, “What is all the row about?”

“Suppose we choose bird about, just for a shilling a shot?” said the laird. “I don’t care for the slaughtering business, and they’ll all be thin enough when the farmers have done with them; and—say a sovereign for the first fifteen?”

“Well, I’m quite agreed,” was my reply, feeling confident in myself and my weapon; “but the birds must come to the ground; no hanging to twigs;” saying which I took a careful aim at a bird which sat very clear out from the branches on the top of a straight-growing ash.

There was a slight breeze blowing across the top of the wood, and young Mr. Rook was enjoying a nice gentle swing, which was, however, rather annoying to me. However, I got the little bead on his head, dropped it an inch under him, and, taking my chance of the swinging, pulled, and down he came, as neatly taken as a well-driven golf-ball off the teeing-ground.

“Brothers should not be parted thus,” was the laird’s cool reply, and throwing up the light little weapon smartly, he sent a bullet through a bird in the next branch, but toppling over it hung by both feet, much to his chagrin.

“It’ll be a lost bird if it doesn’t come down before I make my fifteen,” I said; but just as I spoke, the breeze, a little stronger, gave the tree a good shake, its hold relaxed, and it came down to the ground with a thud.

Choosing another outsider I was not so fortunate, for just as I pulled he ducked his head, and the bullet went past him.

“My turn next,” was the call. But the laird was no luckier, though the bullet must have grazed it, as it rose and fluttered into the nest, and saved its life for that day at least.

That he was merely aiming for the body, and not to catch the head, I could see, and I was just beginning to wonder whether I should not do the same, as a rook’s head on a tree from thirty to forty feet high is no easy mark, more especially when the summer breeze is gently rocking the tops. If the bullet was merely put through the body, however, there was a

likelihood of the birds hanging and falling on the branches' which was not by any means desirable, seeing that they did not count unless they came to the ground.

"This for a win," at any rate was my call, choosing the bird furthest out on the right branch of the old Scotch pine.

The tree was stiff and the bird was steady, and with his head cocked slightly up, as if looking out for some of his vexed parents in the crowd above. Remembering always that my weapon threw an inch and a half high or so, I saw his crown just over the bead, pulled gently, and down he hurried, without the slightest ceremony or leave-taking.

The laird chose a bird in a tree to the left, pulled and missed, reloaded, pulled, and missed again.

"Don't lose your money and your temper at the same time," was my remark as I settled on to his missed bird, but I was not any more fortunate, and he tried again with success, leaving me, however, one rook up.

We kept together, taking shot and shot about all through the wood, and found ourselves pretty evenly matched, standing "twelve all," when he had, however, two birds hanging in the branches. Both of us wished to get to fifteen as soon as we could, and were very hurried in our firing, too hurried indeed to make much execution. If his hanging birds came down to the ground, as they threatened to do every minute, I would be thrown out of it and, though I would have a few shillings the best of the individual shooting, would lose on the whole match. I had just, after missing twice, knocked a young rook off a very high perch, and ran out fifteen, when one of the two came down to the ground, too late, however, to save the sovereign, though of course it was one more added to his shillings.

"Like my luck!" was the call, "let us go on again," and go on again we did for two more matches, one of which I won and one I lost by three birds. The breeze increased as the evening approached, and, the rookery being exposed and the trees pretty high, we found it very difficult work to bring many down with the bullet, and, smoking our pipes, retired as the old crows, which had been sitting for hours disconsolately in the trees of the outlying woods, gathered in slowly and sorrowfully, and making us feel in anything but a genuine sporting mood. Rooks

must be shot ; but, after all, we thought, rook-shooting is no great sport.

Next day, ere the sun was across the meridian, the whole welkin rang with the noise of a hundred guns, and one would have thought, indeed, that a heavy battle was raging in the neighbourhood. The entire parish, indeed, had declared war against the rooks. Farmers had turned out—some with old flintlocks, some with long Queen Anne muskets, and some with no weapons at all, relying upon their dexterity in casting sticks and stones, or their expertness in climbing the trees. “Shot about” was indulged in by some parties, and “give t’owd gun lots of powder, for she loike a lot,” was the call on all sides, notwithstanding bruised shoulders and swelled cheeks from the recoil. Then the wads were rammed home by butting the ram-rod against a tree heavily, in order to get the powder up in the nipple and “not have her hang fire.” Two pipe-bowlfuls and a half, with an old rag on the top, followed by some shot of all sizes mixed with slugs and, in some cases, hard white peas, was the charge used, and most effectually—the sportsman and the rook generally falling at the same time. A few nipples were blown out, one gun burst, fortunately without doing harm ; and the village schoolmaster, in loading a gun which had never been washed out since it was bored, and was as foul as a smoky chimney, had a powder-flask blown he does not know yet where, the whole of his right whisker going along with it. The severest accident, however, occurred to a man who, to cure a kicking gun, as he said, stuck his shoulder to a tree, leaning his head back also on it, so as to have, as he called it, a firm rest for the stock, and so “*prevent the slightest recoil.*” It is needless to inform men who shoot as to the result. The man went about with his right cheek swelled in flannel for a fortnight, and no amount of persuasion will ever make him attend the annual parish blaze.



A BLACK DOG AND A BLACK OWNER.

“R. GRAHAME, the cattle-dealer, is outside, sir, with a strange gentleman. They want to look at our young cattle.”

The speaker was Jock Howieson, familiarly known as the “laird’s man,” being what is known in Scotland as an “orra body,” that is, one that does anything that is required of him, and the gentleman he addressed was Laird Hayslap, one of the most popular men in the whole west country.

“Want to look at our young cattle, do they, Jock? It’s rather early for a man to be on the cadge for heifers, but, no doubt whatever, he’ll be after pedigree stock, maybe for Australia and New Zealand. However, tell them I’ll be out in half a second, I’m just finishing a letter to Mr. Black, o’ *Bell’s Life*, to say (and you’ll agree with me) that the black dog ‘Charlie’—‘Prince Charlie,’ of course, as his running name is—never was in better condition, and that he’ll take a lot o’ beating in the Waterloo.”

“Well I wot that, sir, I’d like to see the dog that will beat him, that’s all I say, but I think, sir, it’s high time he was secin’ a hare.”

“I don’t know but what you are right. I think he looks a little sick for want of a good trial: so, Jock, you’ll better bring them out along with the fawn this forenoon, and, as Grahame likes a course, you’d better come over the hill when we’re looking the beasties.”

“His friend has a dog with him, but it’s a dirty black poacher’s sort, no muckle quality about it whatever. However, no matter, we’ll let Grahame see the black, and, if we get a nice outlying hare on the Lugar meadow, a trial that he’ll not forget.”

Laird Hayslap was one of the old-fashioned school of Scottish landlords who refused to be modernised by mail trains, and the only London Season he knew was the Smithfield Show week, when Jock, his faithful henchman, and himself took up their quarters regularly at the Tavistock, in Covent Garden.

His acres yielded him a couple of thousand per annum of a free rental, and he made another thousand out of the ground round the old home. His great pride was his flock of black-faced sheep, his Ayrshire cows, and his greyhounds, which were all of the old-fashioned rough-sterned Scotch type, well known on the plains of Altcar at Waterloo times. He was exceedingly social and agreeable; and it was generally agreed in the country-side that the laird was "one of the guid auld sort," and so he was. Having more money than a bachelor well knew what to make use of, he bestowed liberally, and (perhaps it was a fault in the eyes of some) betted freely; in fact, no man in all Scotland backed his opinion, if it was represented by a greyhound, freer than the laird. As to Jock Howieson, also a bachelor, he had ideas exactly like his master, and believed that the sole aim of man in this world should be to drive a gig, breed and win prizes with an Ayrshire cow or a black-faced ram, or run a good greyhound. He believed in a future state, "but," as he told the parson, "there maun be some sheep on the hills, kye-beasts in the glens, and hares and hounds, if it is to be a heaven o' happiness," besides, he used to add, "if there's to be milk and honey and sic cauld sickening stuff to a Scotchman, there maun be cows and bees and the like, so ye needna preach to me." He was a rare hand at bringing out a greyhound, and what Jock Howieson, "the laird's Jock," had in the slips was generally something that people at coursing meetings did not care to wager against. "Jist a saxpence, sir," was the extent of his betting, but when Jock Howieson's "saxpence" was "on," men knew that it was on something which was literally bound to win.

Having written his letter, enclosed it in an envelope and stamped it, the laird laid it aside for the postman, and joined Grahame and his English friend, whom Jock had brought in also. He did not need to be told the rules of hospitality in the little back parlour at Turf Tower, as the old place was named.

"How are ye, Laird?" said the cattle-dealer, who was one of the cleverest and, as a Scotchman might say, the quirkiest in the whole trade. "I just brought a friend from the South with me, a greyhound courser like yourself, who wishes to have a look at your Ayrshires, as he wants some good milkers for the London dairymen."

"Glad to see you, sir; always glad to see anyone who wishes

to invest in stock, more especially if he's a courser. Has your dog run much? Been in public, eh?"

"Oh, well, I think he has seen a hare, but——"

"Oh, I'll let him see one this forenoon, if you don't mind, and a dog of mine will show him the way too, if ye have no objection."

"Oh, none in the least, Laird; in fact, I would like very well to see what he could really do alongside of a crack, such as some of your Waterloo dogs."

Having partaken of the laird's hospitality, the party proceeded together to the fields, in which were grazing numerous young Ayrshire cows, the famous milk-making animals of the North, which have the reputation of filling their milking-pails to overflowing. They did not, however, seem to be so very anxious to deal as the laird would have liked, and the stranger seemed to take a great interest in the greyhound, mongrel though he asserted it to be, never letting it go free for a moment.

At last, when all of the cows had undergone a critical inspection, Jock Howieson appeared on the scene, leading the famous black, with a boy leading a fawn and white kennel-companion and carrying with him a pair of slips. The whole party crossed, at his suggestion, a heather hill to a nice meadow where he said there was certain to be a hare or two. It was indeed a rare place for a trial, the meadow-grass not being too long, while there was plenty of what a sailor would call sea-room.

"And now, sir," said the old fellow, halting on the edge of it, "if ye dinna mind, ye may have a trial of your black, though I don't think he'll ever get a chance with old Rory, and after then I'll put in the black."

The stranger lost little time in putting his dog into the slips, and the dog itself seemed only too anxious to be so placed, cocking its ears and straining its neck, while it mewled as if certain that a hare was not very far off.

"And now, Laird," said Grahame, "you'll no doubt be of opinion that the fawn and white old dog will make rings round the other one; I would not mind, if ye care to lay me, taking three five-pound-notes to one that the other has the best of it."

"With all my heart, and I don't think I can make a five-pound-note easier—but hey, Jock sees her!"

Jock, with both dogs straining madly, was at the time sidling away to the left, as if to try and get Puss between himself and the onlookers, who had sat down on a dry peat-stack, about two hundred yards away. In a moment or two more, Puss was seen to leave her form, and, scared by the noise of the dogs, went off at full speed straight for the heather-hill. Running behind her, with the greyhounds neck and neck, the old trainer gave the hare a good long lead; then, with a short race, he let out a ringing "So ho!" as the slips flew empty back to his hand. Neck and neck did the two dogs gallop to their game; but, to the surprise of the laird, as also of his man, the low-bred black that had "seen a hare I believe," stretched out two clear lengths for first turn, came round smartly in the wake of his game, and, after a couple of wrenches, killed cleverly, by beating the fawn and white dog pointless.

"Well," said the laird to Grahame, while the stranger went off to pick up his champion, "if I had not seen that with my own eyes, I could scarcely have credited it. However, the black that the laddie is holding is a dog of different metal, as you'll see directly."

"Well, laird, will you repeat the bet?"

"Repeat the bet! yes, and that I will. I owe you fifteen, so I'll wager ye forty-five to that, or, if ye don't mind, I'll make it a hundred to thirty."

"A hundred to thirty then; and, look here, mind I'll leave it to yourself, but it must be a clean and fair victory."

"Clean and fair I know it will be, as you'll see, John; but the black is against the stranger, and there's my handkerchief for a distinguishing collar."

The old trainer soon put the two dogs in the slips as requested, muttering remarks all the time about "Rory's" defeat and expressing his opinion that "Prince Charlie" would soon show the stranger the road. "I only hope," he said, "that I get a good straight going hare, one that will make the watter flee frae her tail when she rises."

After walking about two hundred yards or so up the meadow, he detected, evidently sewed in amongst the rushes, the object he was in search of. Gently he slipped up behind her, then, with a loud *whirro* and the flinging of his shepherd's crook, he managed to get Puss to rise from her form. Seeing she



"Whirroo! shouts
Jack Howison."

By the author
of the
"Whirroo! shouts"
Jack Howison.

was discovered, she broke off up the meadow at a great pace while the old man steadied the straining couple. It was a long straight slip on level ground, and away they dashed neck and neck, the laird's black not, however, being able to draw its white collar clear of the other. In the last twenty strides the latter swept out again with the same old fire, and, without even giving "Prince Charlie" a chance, defeated him, pointless. The laird was dumbfounded, while Grahame, and his English friend chuckled with apparent delight. As to Jock Howieson, he said that Charlie was fastest; but that the hare went to the stranger. The laird was silent as to this, for he knew his dog had been beaten fairly.

"You say your dog never ran in public to your knowledge?"

"Well, I'll not say that," said the Southron, "I believe he has picked up a small stake, but I know little about him, I don't know even the name he ran in."

"Ahem!" was the remark, "you wouldn't mind selling him?"

"I'm barely at liberty, but I might give you the first offer, when free to do so."

"I'll be glad if you will, and if you come down to the house, Mr. Grahame, I'll let you have a cheque. I'd like, however, if you would say nothing about this trial."

Half an hour afterwards the cattle-dealer and his English friend might have been seen driving down the road from Hay-slap Hall, both like to roll themselves out of the dog-cart with laughter. "I will never forget that owd callant's face when my dog took first turn, I think we've left them mighty uncomfortable. *Ha! ha!* so that's their Waterloo dog that stands in the betting at 8 to 1."

Though the laird was of opinion that nothing would be divulged about the trials in the meadows, he was astonished to find from his next week's *Bell's Life* that his nomination had dropped away down in the betting to 20 to 1, while that of a Mr. Dockenleaf had risen to 6 to 1. What dog the latter gentleman had got hold of, it was said, was not known, but rumour gave out that, though it had not been seen much in public, it was a regular flyer and had been very highly tried. "They were a very sharp lot behind it," the report said, "and the way they have been shuffling things will make their victory, should they secure such, a very unpopular one."

The night before the Waterloo saw Jock Howieson at Formby with "Prince Charlie," vowing that the black dog from Hayslap would make rings round everything at the Adelphi in Liverpool; the laird was not less slow to express his confidence and backed his dog both for the individual courses and the "Long Shots." Next morning at sunrise saw all of them on the drive to Altcar Flats, where, at nine o'clock, the first brace of dogs were placed in the slips. "Prince Charlie" in the fourth trial made rings round his opponent as the old trainer asserted he would, and was backed more freely, though the one that seemed to perform best of all was Mr. Dockenleaf's NS. Mr. Byteall's "Black Swan," which won his courses in splendid style, both in the first and second round.

"It strikes me laird," said Jock Howieson, "that I have seen that dog run before, but, let me try however I can, I canna get a look at him."

"The same thing has been passing through my mind, but oh, that's nothing uncommon, merely an impression. Dogs, I daresay, run very much alike. If both stand, 'Prince Charlie' and he will meet in the final."

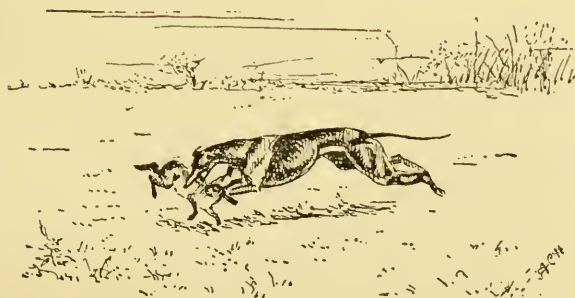
"Then we'll win, laird."

"I'm not so sure about that. 'Black Swan' has great speed and is a smart worker, while he uses his teeth cleverly."

At last came the final day, and the crowd at the Engine House were keen to see the final trials. The two blacks were the favourites, but Mr. Dockenleaf's party accepted every and any offer which was made against 'Black Swan.' The confect hawkers alternately called out "Prince Charlie drops" and "Black Swan drops," and the Scotch cornet-player struck up "Charlie is my darling," to be replied to by "Wae's me for Prince Charlie," by a Yorkshire hostler in Mr. Dockenleaf's 'bus. At length the Cup brace were placed in the slips, and the two dogs were carefully steadied on a great big striding hare, and amidst a roar that might have been heard away out at sea, the two stretched out to their game. Fortune was slightly in favour of the Scotch dog, and it had fire enough to take advantage of Fortune's favours, for it stretched out a clear length to its hare, came round after it, making two or three very clever points, and sending Puss into the jaws of his opponent, who killed and lost amidst Scottish cheers.

The Dockenleaf party were dumb, and their confusion was heightened by the Laird of Hayslap walking up to them and confronting their leader, Mr. Grahame's companion, who was none other than the Mr. Byteall, the owner, saying:

"You very near succeeded, gentlemen, but had you won the Waterloo Cup I would have brought you before the National Coursing Club for disgraceful and dishonest practices. You, sir, know what I mean. As to Grahame the cattle-dealer, he shall be a marked man in the West of Scotland in future, and if he is wise he will join you in the South. Come to look at my cattle indeed, with a strange greyhound that 'had but seen a hare.' But you have been properly served, so I will say no more. You've got a black dog, but he has got a blacker owner!"



THE WYND OF WINDERMERE.



I'VE been forty years at sea, he said,
 Ay, forty years this fall,
 Thirty years on the lake, you see,
 And ten on the Clyde Canal.
 And I've sailed through many a heavy storm,
 But I never yet knew fear ;
 Let the wind blow high, let the wind blow low
 On the Wynds of Windermere.

My lads, says he, we navigate
 With these darlings called the stars,
 Keep Jupiter right and Venus left,
 And right on the bow keep Mars.
 And when you open Bowness light
 Be sure that the land is clear,
 For, mark you, the wind will blow to-night
 On the Wynds of Windermere.

Last night a ram it turned its tail
 To the wind above Shap Fell,
 And a surer sign of a heavy gale
 Did ne'er yet seaman tell.
 And the cocks they crowed when they went to bed,
 And the curlews whistled near,
 And the winds will blow by these signs I know
 On the Wynds of Windermere.

The gale it blew, and the spindrift flew,
 Like mountains ran the seas,
 Which followed behind with the stormy wind
 As high as the tops of the trees.
 Heave off the starboard fender,
 We cried, as we neared the pier,
 But wrecked were we by that stormy sea
 On the Wynds of Windermere.

LADY MINA MILLINGTOWER, M.F.H.

CHAPTER I.



MEADOWVALE is not one of the largest counties in England, yet agricultural authorities will agree with me in stating that it is one of the richest, an acre of its best soil yielding either in grass or grain double the produce which can be got from a similar extent of its neighbours lying to the north, south, east, or west of it. As regards its scenic beauties, it is unsurpassable; and were it not for its quiet lanes, its charming sylvan little lakes, its soft woodland glades, it is questionable, indeed, whether many who now write "R.A." to their names would have won their fame with the brush. It is the favourite haunt, too, of the quiet school of sportsmen, who love to angle in its clear waters during the spring-time; in autumn the knights of the triggers are always to be found amongst its stubbles or its turnips after partridges; and in winter men come from all parts of the country to have a few days with the Meadowvale—a pack the doings of which has been celebrated for years in the columns of the newspapers devoted to field sports and pastimes. The old county-town of Mead, at the time of our story, was never without society or some society movement, from a concert to recruit the lungs of the curate to a charity bazaar to mend the pipes of the broken-winded organ. People literally crept close together in the little place from sheer loneliness, just as sheep do in a snowstorm on the side of a mountain, just as strong men do in a snow-hut on an Arctic expedition. What Mead would have been without its influx of strangers, and the affable, social manner in which they were received, was a question which never entered into the minds of the good people of the place who made their living through catering to their wants; and the man who would have ventured to say that some day the "Medes," as they were familiarly termed by the strangers, would have done without the Persians, as the sportsmen liked to dub themselves, would have been looked upon as a spirit of evil who should be drummed out of the place by the common town crier.

It was at noon on a market day in this little place that a number of farmers were engaged in very serious conversation with a man whom people would say looked strange if they met him on the shore at Ramsgate or the pier at Brighton. There was nothing, however, *outré* about his appearance in a country town to a Shire farmer, bow-legged and short as he was, with hard muscular face, roast-beef complexion, and grey eyes. He was Dick Divotts, the huntsman, who had been with the Meadowvale for years, and had been, as some of them said, on "two sides of every fence in the country, sir, in the same two seconds;" and the subject of their conversation was the Meadowvale hounds, which had been hunted for years by old Lord Millington, the principal landowner in the country, but whose sudden death at his London house at the end of the last hunting season had caused some little gossip as to the probable doings of his successor. His Lordship's heir was Lady Mina Millington, an only daughter: good-looking and handsome, but such an Amazon that those who would have wooed were frightened of her, though every domestic about Millington said that there was "no more kind and amiable lady as ever breathed," and how it was a pity that her poor mother died so early and let her be spoiled by her father. Motherless sons are wild enough, in all conscience, but motherless and only daughters are proverbially apt to get spoiled by doating fathers.

"And what's this they're sayin' as you've been sayin', Dick, up at the King's Head?"

"What do they say I be sayin', Mister Greenvetch, at t' King's Head?"

"Sayin'! Why, they're sayin' as you said that Lady Mina was agoin' to hunt the Meadowvale herself, you rum owd rascal that you are; you're always a settin' 'em by their ears, just as if with the hounds yourself."

"That's all they're talkin' about yet, are they? Well, all I can say 'bout it, Mr. Greenvetch, is that they've got summat to talk about that's true, I tell 'ee, and that's more'n they get every market day in Mead."

"Eh! Why man alive, you don't tell me t' lass is actually goin' to take up the country herself? She's a bit skittish, I know, but, dang me, Dick Divotts, if I thought as she'd a thought o' doin' that!"

"Well, that's all I knows yet ; hunt the country this season she will, and I'd like to see the gent in this 'ere Shire as 'll say Lady Mina Millingtower, my old master's—God bless him !—only daughter won't do a thing once she's taken a mind to it."

"Well, I'd heard last Friday at Nokes market as my landlord, Sir Philip, was goin' to hunt t' shire by subscription, and was goin' to take over the pack."

"He'd a liked to have done so, I daresay ; but it's as like as not, Mr. Greenvetch, as that very talk made Lady Mina resolve to do what she's goin' to do this season, and you know why."

"Jilted her, did'nt he?"

"Jilt, the ——! I begs yer pardin. No ; yer landlord, nor no other man in the country, ever had the pluck to do that ! Why, my old master, cripple as he was, would a stood upon his crutches and shot him ! But I daresay he wouldn't a needed. She'd a settled matters herself."

"Well, there was something, for they were a bit thick, you know, and you know it was hinted at in the Lunnnon papers."

"So there was, but it never came to jilting. If you want to have it, *he funk'd it*, as I have seen him do more than once when he didn't like the looks of things in front of him. And I'll tell you how it was, for I was there. We were a-comin' on together with hounds pressin' their fox hard in Drybottoms, Lady Mina, and me, and your master—I beg your pardon, *landlord*. Well, she was ridin' a great, big, striding bay, just sent down from London—not one of 'em as is recommended as being ridden by a lady, for she'd have nowt to do wi' such spiled cattle, she'd say—and he twisted his mouth about and commenced to run awkward with the Bottoms ditch six feet full of water just in front. Sir Philip was close alongside, and didn't seem to like the look of things, or he'd given her a lead. Losing her temper, however, she slipped a word—excusable in you or me, or mayhap in my missus or your missus, at times. It wasn't a *good* word, or it wasn't a bad one either, just as circumstances go ; but my old lord had a habit o' sayin' it when in temper before his daughter, and, you see, t' lass maybe couldn't help it. However, Sir Philip 'funked' the ditch, and my lady, too. But it strikes me very hard his own present lady has let him know some strange language since, and I heard him a-gettin' it from

her one day herself. *Jilt* my Lady Mina Millingtower! Lor' bless you, no, sir."

"Well, Divotts, as you will; but I think it would be more like Sir Philip Daveney hunting the Meadowvale Hounds than a lady, and don't let your tongue carry you too far, for you might be asked to serve under him some day."

"Well, I might be *axed*, as you say," said the old huntsman, drily; "but I never yet worked under a muff of a master yet, and I never shall. I couldn't do it; and with no family and a little bit in the bank, Dick Divotts can afford to look on if it comes to that; but one thing I know, I've got a home at Meadowvale so long as my lady lives, and that's maybe more'n you've got on t' Daveney estates."

It was possibly well for the old huntsman that he uttered these words, as the farmer bade him good-bye, in an undertone, for just at that minute the group divided to allow a gentleman to pass. It was the baronet of whom they had been speaking; along with him was the Treasurer of the Covert Fund, who motioned the old huntsman to step aside.

"Of course you've heard the step her ladyship means to take regarding the hunting of the county, Divotts?" said the former.

"I heard it from herself a week ago. Fact is, I've the letter in my pocket now."

"Never mind the letter. What do you think of such a step?" said Sir Philip, impatiently.

"Well, I don't think there's anyone in the whole country knows so much about huntin' as herself," said the old huntsman, proudly; "she knows every hound in the pack, and my lord, her father, used to say she knew more than hisself, and I dare-say, Sir Philip, you know how well she can ride across country."

"Ahem!" said the baronet, with a short, stiff, sulky bow. "Good morning; she'll spoil the country, that is all."

And however great a "craner" the baronet may have been, there was truth in the remark, for it was not likely that the hard-riding men of the Meadowvale were going to stand the badinage of the followers of every other pack within a hundred miles round as being under petticoat government. Dick Divotts, who had gathered much cunning out of the fox from long following him, turned and laughed in his sleeve, and said, "Well, I wonder

how it'll all go. One thing is certain, if I stick to Lady Mina, Lady Mina will stick to the old missus and me. But I must get out of Mead this market day, or with a drop of ale I'll be babbling like an owd turkeycock, and every farmer is wantin' to draw me out. So one glass of good ale at the Head, and then home."

CHAPTER II.

IT was the last week of July, and London, gay London, was stretching her wings like a migratory bird preparing for a long ocean flight. Parliament was sitting far on into the night, and the careless Bohemian, as he wandered homeward in what are called the "small hours," saw the lamp on the gilded tower of Westminster grow dim against the first streaks of the rising sun, like the anchor-light on the forestay of a yacht in early morning. "Parliament was likely to sit," said the newspapers, "till far on in August," so that Society could not be expected to wait for it. For three or four weeks paragraphs had been appearing which announced that Lord Kohl Rabi had taken Tappitstane Towers, with the deep forests, moors, and fishings, for the season, and that Sir Sappho Sordstyx would be the guest of The MacMarrow at Glenmarrow during the coming shooting season. Who would to Goodwood were at Goodwood, and some there were—but this hasgot to be characteristic of Cowes—determined to hang on for some yachting by the Isle of Wight. It was cheap, if lonely. The Park was not deserted, the Row still had its charms. People paraded in the walk on the Sunday afternoons as formerly, and in easy, negligent attitudes stretched themselves on their penny chairs under the leafy trees. Now and then some notable would pass, and lady or gentleman would come in for some remarks of a complimentary or uncomplimentary nature. Complexions were commented upon, but ladies are never content with so shallow a thing as the complexion; and so their characters also came under the handrake. Perhaps as she walked stately down through the ranks of the critics, there was no one who came in for more attention than Lady Mina Millingtower. The deep mourning well became her, and the masses of crape contrasted well with her golden

hair, which beamed in the sunshine. Her face was the face of health, but now and then one could see that it was haunted by some care. She looked as if she felt conscious that the eyes of every one were upon her, *and they were*. In the last edition of the leading organ of fashionable Society had appeared a paragraph which, in the usual way, stated that "a considerable amount of gossip had been caused amongst hunting men by the announcement of the fact, in a well-informed country journal, that Lady Mina Millington, the wealthy heiress, &c.," and so on. What annoyed her was the fact that it contained a statement or two which she wished only to be known by her huntsman and herself. How did they come out? Alas! poor Divotts; that last glass at the King's Head and some banter from the farmers had made you babble, as you expressed it, like a turkeycock, and the editor of the country journal had, in strict confidence—as if there were ever such a thing about a country editor—had a look at my lady's letter. As soon as that letter was shown depend upon it the greedy ears of London were opened wide, and not in vain.

Lady Mina Millington was now the subject of gossip in every club, and fortunate was it for her that the season was so near an end. Feeling that she was being talked about, the fair Amazon resolved not to tarry long in the Great City, but to return to her ancestral home at once, where she at least knew she held the hearts of her people, and was free from the evil effects of all innuendoes and insinuations. So ere Society met for their last Sunday's tittle-tattle under the lime-trees, she was home at Millingtons gazing from the topmost turret at the country, golden with the ripening grain; following the hounds over fields, with her memory of glorious hunting days, far away on to the dip of the horizon, and wondering much about the hunting days to come. Seizing her guitar, which she had laid down for a moment, she, with heaving heart and full sweet contralto voice, as her hair waved in the breeze and shone in the sun like the top of a bursting wave, sang of her love for her lands:

Oh, talk not of their joys of town,
Their picnics, routs, and dances,

But let me to the country down—

I've simple country fancies.

I love to hear the lark at morn,

I love to hear the hunting-horn,

And, oh, the waving, yellow corn

My simple heart entrances.

When pent-up in the playhouse stalls,

Oh, little are they thinking,

They miss the balmy dew that falls,

The lark at eve is drinking.

But dearer still than all to me

Is golden field or gowan lea

On bush, or briar, or woodland tree,

When summer's sun is sinking.

Oh fields, and lakes, and streams my own,

My love I scarce can prove you,

And woodland glades that's round you grown,

And sky that gleams above you.

You wild birds that do sing at e'en,

You bees that flit the flowery scene,

My heart is all your own, I ween,

Oh, how I do so love you.

She had just finished, with tears streaming from her eyes, when a servant announced the huntsman.

CHAPTER III.

It was Dick Divotts' first meeting with Lady Mina since his good old master died, and there was naturally a little soft-heartedness shown by both, though it did not get as far as blubbering, and the subject was at once changed from death to business.

"And what do the people say about it, Divotts," she asked eagerly, "now that they know it is my firm intention?"

"Well, there be some as says that it won't make much of a difference, as you allus was master before my lord, your father, died; but Sir Philip and a lot of 'em thinks that it won't do.

They don't seem to like the idea, that's all. Farmers all seem to take kindly to it, but the wimmen folks are all dead against it *to a man*," continued the huntsman.

"That might have been expected," was the reply; "however, that does not matter; we shall see. *One* man shall not hunt the country if I can help that, Divotts; and till I can make this certain, Lady Mina Millingtower is M.F.H. of the Meadowvale, and things will just go on the same as if your late master were alive."

* * * * *

When harvest was three-parts over Dick Divotts was kept very busy cub-hunting, and was joined by many of the hard-riding young country squires and farmers, who all tried to draw the old man, with blank draws as the invariable result.

"D'ye see yon castle through the trees? It's just a nice ride over, and you might see my lady herself. She'd let you know, I dare say, a good deal better than an old man like me," he would answer.

Lady Mina contented herself with a few visits to the kennels to see the old man at the close of the day's work. At last came that day in the end of October when the first cards of the fixtures were sent out, not from the office of the Secretary of the Covert Fund, who was a known Sir Philipite, but from the office of the steward of the estate. Pedlar's Pike was the fixture, as it had been from time immemorial with Meadowvale opening days, but the pike-keeper was sore dismayed on finding that instead of a long string of carriages as on former occasions only a few vehicles, mostly hired at Mead, rumbled into view. Not one drag, not one tandem cart was there, and as the hour, eleven, drew near it really looked as if there had been some doubt as to the appointed place of rendezvous. City men, in gorgeous hunting array, with their money all *over*, instead of under them, were in strong force, while the Millingtower hunting farmers were there every one. Customary good greetings were as hearty as heretofore, but these were very early subdued into hushed whisperings, which dropped to a dead silence when the hounds appeared in view with the new M.F.H., in green habit, surmounted with red jacket and hunting cap, appeared in view. As she bowed to all, however, one could see from her lip that she missed the faces, and knew what she suspected might prove



Lady Nina, M.F.H.
reads the "riot act."

the case : the country was on strike. "Well, let them please themselves," she remarked inwardly, though she could not help thinking that she might be going too far, out of sheer pique.

* * * * *

The opening day passed off quietly and with little sport, which as a rule is the case with opening days. The first week passed without a good thing ; the second with one of the best things, the London *Park* Correspondent said, that had ever been experienced in the country. Still the country people held aloof, and the fields got thinner every day. A Master of Foxhounds may give rebukes to members which can be readily forgiven ; a Mistress of Foxhounds only those which fester and rankle.

Lady Mina Millington had a hasty temper, and it was made worse with the knowledge of the fact that she was the daily subject of conversation for a hundred miles round. Little paragraphs, too, at times, she knew to be pointed at her, many of them, no doubt, from the gall-dipped pens of her own sex. "She hunts the country for a set of sporting tailors who come down by train from Shoddyham," said one, "and seems rather to court their society." After this, the sporting tailors had a very bad time of it, and in the end began to think of staying at home also.

One, who persisted in talking loud at the covert-side was gently reminded to leave his goose at home in future if he could not keep it from cackling, while a second, who made a feeble attempt at a view holloa, was asked if his mamma did not think it dangerous to allow him out before he had got over the whooping-cough. On the opening day of the sixth week the field was reduced to the worthy M.F.H., the huntsman and whips, a couple of farmers, a local vet., and a few of the town brigade. How and when was it going to end was the question. Dick Divotts said he thought he could answer it, and he said it would be when not a single stranger would come forward. For this, it was evident, they had not to wait long, for on the following Monday, when they met at Pedlar's Pike, the field comprised only one man, a handsome-looking gentleman of about twenty-five years of age, with slightly bronzed complexion, who certainly never had been out with the Meadowvale before.

His loneliness seemed rather to surprise himself, and it was not till hounds were thrown in in the covert at hand that he found himself even more lonely than the young and fair horseman in G. P. R. James's novels, who had always a dark and tall companion. Not knowing the country, and having no one to guide him, it was but natural that he should make mistakes. And so he did, for he headed the fox, and had the mortification of hearing himself alluded to in a remark to the huntsman as a man milliner from Mead, probably just off the sewing machine. But the fox did get away eventually, and, being stout, strong, and straight-necked, soon had the hounds streaming behind him, with the Man Milliner, the M.F.H., and Dickie Divotts going well and steadily in their wake. Mile after mile was covered, hedges topped, ditches flown, valleys sunk and hills risen without a check, and in the end he was pulled down in a lea-field, with the stranger in the field behind him. The death rites were soon over, and the huntsmen handed the brush to the fair M.F.H., who felt as embarrassed in the situation she was placed in as did the stranger, the Man Milliner, to whom she had to present it. It was Leap Year certainly in the hunting-field, and something altogether new in his experience. Still, it was done with blushes on both faces, while the huntsman and whips sniggered in their sleeves.

It will suffice to say that at a hunt ball in a neighbouring county town three days afterwards Lady Mina Millingtower had introduced to her by an old friend Sir Robert Mangford, a son of an old friend of her father's, and one of the ablest hunting men in the shires. There were apologies made about heading foxes, and calling people "men milliners." There was a promise given to come and take the Meadowvale horn, and a condition made and agreed that the hand that gave it should go along with it. A week after that there was a wedding, a week after that a homecoming, and a week after that the biggest field met at Pedlar's Pike that had ever been seen with the Meadowvale. Lady Mina was there, but it was as Lady Mina Mangford, not Lady Mina Millingtower, M.F.H.



The Man Milliner proves him-
self a Workman.

THE OLD COACH'S LAST JOURNEY.

A REMINISCENCE OF THE ROAD.

“ READ that all over again, lad, every word on it. Lor! we can't hear enough about coaching now-a-days, seeing that we're laid up on the roadside, all gone but the axletree. And so they've formed a Coaching Club, have they, and are goin' to revive the glories of the road? Ha, ha, that'll take them all their time, I should say.” It was old Jack Splashbar who spoke, one of the best whips on the northern roads in the good old days when steam had not been put on wheels: and the lad he addressed was an old guard who had accompanied him on many a journey. He had just got hold of a copy of the *Morning Post* containing a description of one of the Coaching Club's opening gatherings at the Magazine in Hyde Park, and as for a long time coaching literature, even to the occasional sight of a way-bill, had been at a premium amongst them, it was but natural that they should devour it word by word. Greys, browns, roans, and blacks were all commented on freely, and the mention of each team seemed to raise some warm reminiscences of the olden times, of Jem Barnes and Jack Reed and the old lot, and of nights going over Shap Fell, bless you, when we stuck in the snow.

The old inn in which they sat was just as mail coach times had left it; no modern bar, no polished beer engines, no gilt and glitter, but just a cosy fireplace, with plenty of room for coals and places at the side for two, with, for ornaments, a couple of fitches of home-cured bacon hanging down from the ceiling.

“I tell you what it's comin' to, Jack: everything has its day. What was a good job and bread and butter to you and me, is a nice game now for those gents that lives up in Lunnun, and it'll be the same with the steam-pots.”

“Never, Jim Bryden, never! Blood in themselves won't do that, and grease and smoke on the engine: no, no, believe me they're just like you and me, Jim, and we'd go ten miles over a

hill rather than go one through a tunnel. No, no, Jim, I've driven often with them on the box-seat, blood won't allow 'em to come so low as that."

"Well, well, there's no sayin', but I never thought when I was on the old Highflyer that ever they'd take to playing at coachin'. Howsomever, as the old blacksmith at Gretna used to say, there's no knowin' what thoroughbreds is up to. 'Some come 300 miles,' says he to me when I was postboy and took him up a job, 'to get the knot tied, and then start off 3,000 miles 'to get it cut,' says he, 'but that lass you've got to-day, she's a rum one, for I've had her here three times,' says he, 'and when she slipped me a sovereign to myself says she, "I'll get the change *when I come back the next time*," says she.' Railroads, however, may have spoiled them a bit."

"Many a good story I could tell you, Jim, about 'em, both going down to the Sellinger or comin' up to the grouse shooting. Oh, those were the times, to be sure! Why, if they'd wanted to make me king I tell you I would have thought twice ere I took the job, I would. 'Magnificent spectacle,' is that what they calls their show? 'Splendid teams' you say the paper says? Bah! playin' at coachin' may be all very well, but it can't come up to the old business, neither for drivers nor hosses. What would some of them make of a bad one and the mail five minutes late, eh? Nothing! I should think so! Why, I recollects once at the Greyhound, at Penrith, when we were a good ten minutes behind time, and I had not got right a-going till I found the near leader was new to the business and a regular she-devil, going ends everyways and not pulling a pound the right way. Well, I was savage a bit, for I was ten behind, and I knew that Mr. Ramsay, of Barnton, had backed me to drive a regular savage for the whole of the next stage. Well my temper gets up a bit, and I gives it her *proper*, and I made so much out of her infernal contrariness, I tell you, that she was the best goin' hoss in the coach and never knew it, no more did she. Well, when I gets to the other end, I flings down the ribbons, jumps inside, and swallows a full pot of ale, for I was dead beat, and in comes Mr. Ramsay. 'Stick her in, Mr Ramsay,' says I, 'stick her in, on the near side, if she's any worse than that rat-tailed Witch o' Endor,' says I, 'I may be licked, but I'll try when my hand's in.' Lor, how he laughed. 'Jack,'

says he, and he laughed again, 'there's a tanner for ye! That's the mare you've been a drivin' the whole time,' says he, 'we sent her down the road, because we thought some passenger or inspector might get hold of the thing and so get you into trouble if anything happened.' Oh, he was a rum lot, but so were they all, Jim."

The old coaching lot at Carlisle is getting very well thinned down now, and railway characters, men who have actually grown grey in the service or been "lopped short," as the old stage drivers used to term it, have taken their places. To the very last, however, the worthies of a bygone age are looked upon with veneration by the "Steam-pot men" and its followers, though the latter have seen probably a hundred times more startling scenes and been in quite as many adventures. There is little that is picturesque or poetical about the rail compared with the road, however, and, as the old driver expressed it, the men of the old school would go ten miles over a hill rather than go one through a tunnel. Its fogs, its chills, its frosts, its snows, its wind storms, driving trees down, over which the leaders had half scrambled in the dark ere they were discovered: its floods, and the long wades through brown currents, with nothing but the tops of gateposts—all considered the old coachman liked his life well, and so did the guard. Their horses were good—better than are to be found in the fashionable teams of the present day, if coaching pictures are to be relied on; they had good wages and better chance tips, while every half-way house was a home. To be snowed up was of course no joke, but snowstorms and snowdrifts were not every-day experiences. Possibly no town was more "coachy" than the merry town of Carlisle in the olden times, as, indeed, there is no town more associated with railways and railway servants at the present day, it, indeed, being the Charing-cross for Scotland, just as Oban, with its steamers, is known as the Charing-cross of the Highlands; and in some of the old houses yet a collection of the coaching relics of the ancient days might still be found. The old coaches themselves however, have mostly fallen off their wheels, or been sold into little country places to run to and from the railway stations on market days. Lower still have some of Her Majesty's mail carriages been degraded; for the last one we saw was used as a portable hen-house, in which the poultry were wheeled out to

the stubble-fields, there to pick up what the reapers and the gleaners had left.

It was while the old coachman, Jack Splashbar, was in a deep study, with eyes gazing into the red fire and arms cocked in front as if still holding the ribbons, no doubt making his team go in memory a good fourteen miles an hour, that Jim ventured to whisper to him—

“You don’t know what they’re agoin’ to do with the Old Flyer, Jack, eh?”

“Put her on the road again, eh?” was the quick answer.

“Put her on the road? Yes; but, what do you think? As a hearse! It’s a fact; I heard it this forenoon. Old Brown says he’s goin’ to stick some black feathers on the top of her and make a hearse out of her.”

“Make the old Highflyer into a hearse, into a miserable, crawling two mile an hour coffin box—why, man, she wouldn’t know how to do it.”

“Do it he means to, that’s all I know,” said the old guard.

“Ah well, he’s going to give us all a drive I know every one of the old lot,” and the old coachman nodded in a suggestive manner to his old guard, “so see if we can’t finish her up in the way a coach should be wound up. A hearse! oh dear, I’d sooner see her made into a railway parcel cart.”

It was a bright morning in the first week of September, and the click of the reaper was heard rattling out merrily amongst the yellow corn which sloped to the Solway. Over Criffel the clouds were trailing in grey fleeces, while the mists hung low on the moss lands of the Border—mists which in days gone past hid the moss troopers in the daytime from the stern-faced burghers who looked northward from those grim castle walls which many a time had been decorated with the faces, still bold in death, of Scotland’s most daring men; but the autumn sun stole through, and everything that was silvery became golden under its rays. Better morning for moors or stubble one could not have, or for a drive away into the mystic borderland, the land of Johnnie Armstrong of Gilnockie, and others of the old cattle-lifting school of warriors. A day indeed it was for one to choose the old stage-coach in preference to the modern railway train. And there outside the old “Bell-wether” was the old stage-coach the High-flyer, just as it stood forty years before, with four eager tits and

old Jack Splashbar on the box-seat. There were none of the old-fashioned travellers in plaids and wrappers, however, but rather a crew of coachmen, guards, and fossilized postboys, "postboyhood" lasting, it may be remarked, all through a man's lifetime. It was the morning of the much-promised drive, and there was a big crowd about to see the old worthies setting out on their outing. Every guard carried a straight-horn, ones that the spiders had woven webs round the mouths of for years in some old corner, and every coachman a whip, so that the Highflyer was pretty well manned. In a minute more the heads of the struggling horses were freed, and, with old Jack sitting as gaily on the box as he did when the handsomest young fellow on the road, and the pride of all the barmaids, and four straight-horns winding all at once, away they went, their red coats shining in the sun, for Beattock—not that they had any particular journey in view. Such a lot of boys of threescore and upwards never had been seen before, and the workers in the harvest-fields behind the modern reaping machines looked up, as did the shearers in the days of old, and gave the customary cheer. Carters pulled aside surprised, and old sportsmen forgot the pointers that crouched with full nostrils over the coveys at their feet as they saw a sight they had been of opinion they never would see again. In amongst the woodland trees they wound the horn, raising echoes which had not been heard for a long time, while giving key-notes of old tunes and old songs which had been familiar to everyone all over the old road in the good old days. Jim, with a voice feeble, yet not cracked, gave the stableman's song of "The Halfway House," or as much of it as he could recollect, getting quite a chorus from the whole of the horns:—

Oft in the merry Maytime,
When sweet dews clogged the hay,
We'd lie beneath the hedgerows
And listen by the way
Until the sounds came nearer,
And sweet we heard the note
Of the horn sweetly winding
To the old Tantivy trot.

You could hear them sink the hollow,
You could hear them rise the hill,
Foot and foot you'd hear them follow,
Aye, all pulling with a will ;

Then, swelling with the breeze, aye,
Came that sound that's ne'er forgot—
Of the horn sweetly winding,
To the old Tantivy trot.

The old inns of course had to be inspected and commented on, and so ere the afternoon was well gone the company were all very happy and joyous. Old songs seemed to come back to them with sudden flashes of memory, nearly all of which recounted coaching feats of the old times. "Canny Geordie Stephenson has got an iron horse" was a favourite, which told about how it "couldn't face a hill," and how "they fed it upon water and tickled up its tail, and that's the kind of nag they have a carrying the mail." Then old Jack insisted on giving just as much as he could recollect of a song he used to sing, which was as to how

"It's nice to see them stretching out as level as a pack,
Ribbons just a stented, boys, and not a leather slack;
A cheery lass upon the box; a bonnie summer's morn;
And some music at the corners on the old straight horn.

Chorus.

"It's fine upon a box, boys, a team to be a tooling,
Just a breeze a blowing, boys, to keep the tits a cooling,
Here's a toast, my lads: 'It's the best o' well-kept roads,
With tight tits, and bright wits, and tidy level loads.'"

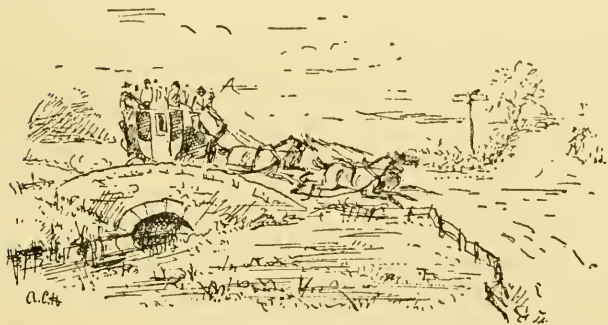
When the old man's song, which was received with quite a chorus of horn-sounding from the guards, was over, it was time to resume the journey homewards. As they took their places Jack nodded to the old guard with the remark, "They're too jolly to get killed, and I'll see the Highflyer isn't made a hearse of." When well steadied down he went off at a spanking pace, and as soon as within sight of Carlisle walls he bent off the new road and down the old one which had been shut up for years. "Jack," cried the soberest of postboys, "you're off the road; for any sake pull up;" but, with the remark from Jim that Jack had driven the road for twenty years and ought to know, he subsided. So down they went, some singing, and some winding away at the horns, notwithstanding that a farmer waved them back with a pitchfork. Giving them their heads the old coachman literally raced them down a hill, round a



They can make a hearse of her now if they like!

Robert B. Brady
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corner, and on to an old wooden bridge marked "Unsafe for vehicles." A Crash! A smash! and all were in the brook, from which old Splashbar was the first to scramble, muttering, "They can make a hearse of her now if they like, Jim." Whether it was on account of their jolliness, or of having served their apprenticeship in youth to coach accidents or not, we cannot say, but none of them were hurt, nor were the horses; but the Highflyer was a complete wreck. All got home as best they could; and the old vehicle was left there, all but the wheels, to be swept away by the autumn floods. This was the old coach's last journey.



CURLEW AND PLOVER SHOOTING.



HERE is an old sporting saying in the North that seven curlews are enough for a lifetime. From my own experience I cannot well believe that, for I must say I have killed over the fourteen, and do not feel at all like giving up the ghost. That the curlew is a very difficult bird to approach everyone who has been out after wild fowl on the seashore, or amongst marsh land on the edge of the moorlands, must admit ; indeed, the whaup, as he is termed in Scotland, is one of the most wary of birds. That birds have no power of scent has been ably argued by American sportsmen, but if the whaup has no scent he must have the very best of hearing, for he will rise and fly away long before you can get within gun-shot, and that, too, at times when he has not the slightest possible chance of seeing you. In frosty weather, when the ground is hard, and you should be trying to stalk him as he is feeding, if you dump your gun stock on the ground you will be sure to rise him at a hundred yards, and everything with him, for he never flies off without his peculiar warning note, which no wild fowl within hearing ever fails to observe. Many and many a time when creeping up a meadow edge to get a couple of barrels at a flock of golden plover have I had cause to anathematise the long-billed grey bird, which stole away from amongst the rushes, with his infernal scream setting them all up and so spoiling an hour's patient stalking. Disappointments of this kind always made me thirst for vengeance, and possibly that is the reason that I have killed more than my allotted share.

Though the whaup is not entirely a Scotch bird, it is possibly to be found in the North in greater numbers than in the South, being indeed, a frequenter of all moorlands in lowlands and highlands. It is frequently alluded to in old Scotch songs, and in the ballad of Kate Dalrymple, the dwelling-house of the fair maid who had a wriggle in her walk, and a snivel in her talk, is described as being in a place where whaups and plovers cry eerie. Mr. William Black has a "whaup" as a character in the "Daughter of Heth," and if I mistake not there is a "whaup" too in one of the "Tales

from Blackwood," I forget which. Everyone in the South, too, must be familiar with the curlews which Tennyson describes as calling across Locksley Hall.

However, these are matters of little interest. There was very little poetry in my enterprise last week, and they might have indeed called just as they pleased, so long as I thought I could get within range. The golden plover had been piping for some time on the long shallows of the sea coast of Ayrshire, having been recruiting after coming down from the moor edges, and were in that nice plump condition, hard of plumage, and swift of pinion, that makes one long to get within forty yards of them. Mixed with flocks of lapwings they were in hundreds in the fields along the shore, but it was not easy getting close up to them, and when once started they would fly round in circles high up in the air and then go off with a sixty-mile-an-hour dash for some far-away field where you dare not follow. The great obstacles to getting near them were the whaups, of which there were two or three different sets about the ground, always trying to pick up what they could get at the roots of rash bunches on the edges of little mossy hollows. There they were from grey morning till dusk, shifting at times from one moss patch to another, but never going far away, and seeming to be always on the outlook for you. "From bird to bird the signal flew," to slightly alter Sir Walter Scott, as each time we tried to get up, the peewits beginning to start their little mewing calls, which they give on preparing to take wing, the golden plovers commencing to run and pipe a little, and then all up and off, Master Whaup, the cause of all the mischief, shifting to fresh feeding-ground.

Determined to have fair good sport at everything that rose, from a jack snipe to a barnacle goose, I loaded a mixed lot of cartridges, some with No. 8, some with No. 6 for plover, and some with No. 4 for my particular friends the curlews, giving them all three drachms of powder. Marking the contents on the outside carefully, I arranged them in different pockets of my shooting coat and started on my expedition, accompanied only by a bare-legged plough-lad, who was to be bag-carrier, assistant-stalker, and guide. With a slight touch of autumn frost in the air, the atmosphere was crisp and bracing, but the stillness was not at all in favour of my getting close to the wary customers,

which were rising and settling time after time away down in the marsh lands beyond. Some snipe, too, had come in about the bogs, but they did not tempt me, as I was more bent on securing some of the golden plover, almost as fine in their season as good November partridges, and of knocking down their curlew policemen. Getting close in to an old "fell" or turf-dyke, I followed its course for a time, the lad crawling behind bare-headed, with his bonnet in his mouth, as if afraid any part of it would be detected, and apparently most anxious to see the sport. When we got right opposite to where the plovers were sitting, we could see that they were feeding away from us, and that, being fully eighty yards off already, there was little chance of my getting a shot at them from that direction. What was to be done? Cross the field in their view I dared not, and to get to the other side meant a circuit of a mile and a half through dirty, slushy moss and water, which would have spoiled every stitch of clothes I had on. The clothes would have been sacrificed, however, had I not thought that my old friends, the whaups, would get up and defeat me.

"Look here, my lad," I said, looking round to the urchin, who was as curly-haired as an Irish water-spaniel, and quite as eager for the fun. "You cross the burn, then creep through the rushes into the hollow beyond them, then come crawling forward in this direction, slowly, so as to get them to come this way. Don't be in a hurry, I'll lie here and get a shot at them on the wing."

Away went the boy, bonnet in mouth, and soon I saw him cross the burn and disappear amongst the long rushes in the meadow. His progress I marked by two jack snipes which he flushed, and then I saw him crawl out on to the more open ground fully 300 yards on the other side of the flock. For a time they were so busily engaged running to and fro feeding, that they did not observe his approach, but a little piping from the leading birds showed that he was detected. Still he approached slowly, and they did not rise, but rather altered their direction, and began feeding towards the place where I lay. The minutes passed slowly, for I was getting very anxious, knowing that some of my old Scotch-grey friends would jump up and take the lot with them. The chambers of my gun lay open for a time as I hesitated between putting in the No. 6 cartridges or

the No. 4; thinking the latter the better for curlews, which take a good strong shot, while I should have to rake the former as they passed on the wing.

The old "pheo, pheo" signal at once showed me that the whaups were up, and in five seconds after the whole of the plovers. Two No. 4's went in at once, and scarcely had the barrels re-locked than, as fortune would have it, two unsuspecting curlews came right down and across me. The first one got the contents of the right barrel in his breast just as he had in a manner jumped back surprised; and the second, as he bent away with a warning call to his mates, got the left athwart his right wing, both coming down "slick." As the plovers were now circling round, I loaded quickly with No. 6, and waited my chances. The flock had divided, some were crying round and round high over head; and the rest—the sound of a hundred wings let me know where the rest were, for, wheeling, I just caught the leading bird of the flock, which was flying low, and in time to send the second barrel in again as they steadied from their swerve. Five birds dashed down dead, one almost knocking its head off, so great is the velocity with which these birds fly. Three others I picked up on the line of their flight, so that, with the curlews, I had every reason to be proud of my stalk.

Rejoining me, the lad had the cheering information that some "wee-jucks" were in the burn, and that he had watched and seen that they had not risen when I fired; I gave him sixpence as a reward for having done his duty well, and asked him to lead the way to the spot. This he did so exactly that when the bunch of teal rose I had one to each barrel. The remainder did not, however, settle again as I had expected, but held away seaward. As there seemed to be a good many snipe amongst the marshes, and as the curlews and plovers had no doubt gone off out of harm's way for a time, we beat them up, and were rewarded with two and a half couple, together with one of those exceedingly rare birds, a water-rail. Scarcely had we searched the whole of the rushes, than was heard the crack of two or three guns away over in the direction in which the plovers had disappeared, and, looking back, I saw them circling in large numbers. Getting back to my old point by the turf wall, I made the lad lie down in the meadow,

with instructions to act as usual if the birds should settle out of distance. After the sound of two more shots, down they came, but high—high overhead and wary. After two wide circles they lowered full twenty feet, but still were out of gun range. At last the pilot bird swooped down close to the ground, and they began to circle round the field as if looking for a likely piece to alight. As the afternoon was far gone, and it was more than likely that they would make off for the shoals on the shore, I determined to give them the contents of both barrels, if they came indeed within anything like range at all.

Fortunately for me a stray bird came past and gave his call, the result being that it was returned, and the circling flight came round. As they rose to clear the slope, going hard at forty yards off, I sent both the barrels off almost simultaneously, and well enough ahead as I thought to catch the leaders, though I found I had missed them, and bowled over several of the birds in their wake, so fast had they been going. I picked up four, and, as dusk was falling, gave the bag to the lad to carry home-wards, after bowling over as a present a rabbit he pointed out to me nestling at the foot of a rash bunch. This finished a very good day's sport of a kind which gives far more pleasure than a week's battue.



THE CHITTYWEE.



HEY may talk full hard of their big bombard,
 And their Alexandrian wonders,
 And boast full long of their iron ships strong,
 Of their Temeraires and Condors.
 But there's one wee yacht that's named for a cat,
 That is *the* great ship of the sea,
 'Tis the little sea Kit that a bonnie wee chit
 Calls the wee, wee, wee, Chittywee.

Down, down to the rail does she bend to the sail,
 While the scuppers loud are roaring,
 Blow, blow, does the breeze, till the big green seas
 From her stem to her stern are pouring.
 And tack, tack, tack, she comes beating back,
 As the cry goes "Helms a-lee!"
 Round does she fling, and off again spring,
 The wee, wee, wee, Chittywee.

Laying low her side she streams through the tide
 And takes the seas o'er her shoulder,
 There are boats big, big, but no matter the rig,
 There have ne'er been boats yet bolder.
 Some try to pass on her weather, but alas!
 They are glad to get through her lee,
 For to every puff does luff, luff, luff,
 The wee, wee, wee, Chittywee.

Now on one wee boat from every yacht,
 Full strained each sailor's eye is,
 And its hip, hip, hip, hooray for the ship,
 Full loud each sailor's cry is.
 A smarter craft, from fore to aft,
 Has ne'er yet sailed the sea,
 Than the little sea Kit, that a bonnie wee chit
 Calls the wee, wee, wee, Chittywee.

WITH THE RABBIT-CATCHER.



HERE is nothing the Legislature, now so largely composed of city-reared men, comes so much to grief over as rural matters ; in fact, it somehow bungles across country like a star-gazing horse with a bit in his mouth, reckless of bogs and quagmires, and totally regardless of disused quarries and pitfalls, lying hidden on the other side of blind fences. No man can withhold from the House the credit of wishing well, but at the same time it must be said that it comes to grief in a manner quite as ludicrous sometimes as did Leech's Lord Tom Noddy in the hunting field. When the Hares and Rabbits Bill was passed through Parliament, a most woful amount of ignorance was displayed as to the habits of ground game, even by many of the farmers themselves, and so it is no wonder that it has been the subject of much litigation and platform politics. Why hares should be coupled with rabbits is not very clear to anyone who understands anything about ground game ; there is nothing in common between them, and the expression "hares and rabbits" seems to be indeed a conventionalism, used in the same sense as rats and mice, cats and dogs, and so on. Every man reared on the land knows or ought to know that the hares do not burrow, and they propagate so slowly that they are always under the power of the landlord or his keeper to be kept down or reduced to a comparatively helpless number ; whilst the rabbit, on the other hand, is a most prolific animal, burrows in the hedgerows woods, and hillocks, or amongst the rocks, and is most difficult to keep down once the stock has been allowed to get large and troublesome. Yet the law allows no difference between them. It was, however, in the framing of the regulations of the Act for the trapping of the rabbits that the mistake was made ; for, though no doubt, as the Home Secretary said, it was never meant that the trap should be set actually beneath the roof or within the tunnel of the hole, they did not fix the distance from the mouth of the actual tunnel so that the rabbit-catcher was privileged to set it in the actual run from one hole to another fifty yards away. It is sad that these detestable gin traps should

ever be used, and it is earnestly to be hoped that Sir Alexander Gordon's motion in the House of Commons on the subject may be emphatically negatived. All sportsmen know that the greatest abomination above ground is this murderous H spring trap, with its serrated steel jaws snapping together on the fall of the tumbler as ferociously as the jaws of a tiger would on its victim, and causing hours of painful cruelty to the captured animal which, sometimes from six in the evening, is left twisting and wriggling on the threshold of its own home with legs broken and bones protruding from the flesh till daylight next morning. Pheasants scraping the fresh earth, and occasionally partridges (as a rule rarer) will be found in them, and more than once I have pressed down the spring to let some grand old cock fly off, with a hanging leg. Foxes, attracted by the squealing of some captured bunny, rush up to the spot, and find themselves with foreleg firm and tight, and only able to effect their freedom by the fearful process of gnawing off the captured piece of the limb, and limping off with the bleeding stump. Cases of this kind I have known, and I recollect of another experience quite as bad, in a hunting country. I was fishing the river Ayr, and in casting over the edge of a slight fall, fouled my flies, as I thought, on the moss-top of a sunken rock. I twisted, wriggled, and flicked with the slack of my line in several directions, but all to no purpose, and, as the water was already at the top of my fishing, stockings I felt rather annoyed, as I did not care to lose my casting line. At last I made up my mind and plunged up to—*the rock, no!* but a *grand old dog-fox*, with one of these wretched traps at his near forefoot, having been unable to ford the river evidently from its weight, and so had been drowned.

If it was bad for pheasants and foxes before the passing of the recent Act, it is doubly worse now when every farmer and every farmer's son is allowed to set his own traps at what hour he likes, and lift them when he likes. This right certainly belonged to those entitled to kill rabbits on their land before the passing of the Act, but then the rabbits were mostly killed by experts, men well skilled in the business, who made a point of looking at the traps the last thing they did at night, and who were round to examine and spring them before sunrise. Now, owing to laziness, traps are left unsprung all day, and, as everyone knows, pheasants and partridges which do not go out on the feed till sunrise, are

liable to be caught at every scrape of red earth, a thing which should not be tolerated ; indeed, the use of the traps, just as the use of the gun, should only be allowed between the hours of sunrise and sunset, an hour's grace being allowed for setting and springing either way.

But the rabbit-catcher with his bundle of gins is waiting for us ; not the modern half woodman, half rabbit-catcher, or village loafer who is too lazy to work, and wants the skill and temerity of the genuine old-fashioned poacher, but one who since he was the height of his own retriever dog, has followed his father in his rounds at night, and assisted him at times to handle his ferrets, and work the nets at the mouths of the holes.

"Well, Joe, which bit of ground is it to-night?" is our salute, as he touches his cloth cap with his finger and thumb, to the quietly murmured "Evenin', sir." "Well, I was thinkin', sir, o' trying the hillocks, but Farmer Robson, over here, he say he's going to have wheat in the field down i' hawthorn hedge-row here, and as there's such a plaguy lot of 'em, and I wouldn't like to see him get his young wheat all ate up, for he's a good sort, is farmer, and a bag o' potatoes at Christmas don't come amiss, sir, for the savin' o' his crops a little."

"You're quite right, Joe, and no man knows that better than old Robson ; it's a cheap bag o' potatoes to him, but I daresay you don't find farmers all the same."

"Oh dear, no, sir ; some of 'em would have you spend all your time at one bit of their ground, and then when the wheat braird comes through, raise a howl all at once, and talk about damages, when if they'd only let a fellow know about November what they were going to do, we would set to work at once and thin 'em down. It's not what a rabbit eats by way of grass, sir ; it's what he spoils by eatin' young shoots of crop. That's what they complain of, but they should let us know. However, here we are, sir. Lots of 'em here, you can see."

Flinging down his bundle, he seized one of the gins, scooped out a bed for it across the run leading to the mouth of the hole, bent down the spring, letting the safety ring close down to the jaws. Getting it nicely bedded about a foot from the hole-mouth, he fixed the tumbler plate and cross swivel, dexterously sprinkled the whole over with fresh earth, till not a bit of the iron was visible, drew the form of the run across the plate with

his left, so as to leave the whole appearance of the place as he found it, drew down the safety ring, knocked home the pin to which the cord that held the rope was fastened, and picked up his bundle again; the whole work occupying little more than a minute.

"You don't, as a rule, set the traps in the hole?" was my remark.

"Well, sometimes, but mostly a little bit outside. Rabbits are readier caught about a foot from the mouth, somehow; they seem to be kind of careless when outside. I've known 'em not to come out of a hole for days at which I have left a trap inside; they preferring to go out by some one or other of the bolt holes instead. Too much working with your hands at the hole-mouth makes them suspicious."

"Do you get many traps sprung without anything in them?"

"Sometimes. The squirrels, hang 'em, are fearful mischievous little imps that way. I could sometimes swear that they watch me and do it a purpose, the little rogues, though I can never make up my mind to harm 'em or let the dog do, either, though many a one he's chased up a tree. Sometimes, too, I gets a stump of a leg, and then I know I've got a bothersome customer to deal with, for I think they uses him with his stump to spring all the traps. You rarely catches anyways a rabbit that has lost a leg again, but nearly always with a snare or net; though I shot one once that had only one fore and one hind leg, the off one and the near one, and he could go along nearly as fast as if he'd the whole four of 'em."

Loosening another trap from the bundle he soon had it covered over at a hole's mouth, and gradually, as we moved up along the fence, his bundle got smaller. At last there was but one left, and this he soon found a hole for, after which he re-lit his pipe and bent his steps for home. Next morning I was up and out to meet him just as the first streaks of sunlight were lighting up the eastern horizon to see the result of his labours. A short walk along the hedgerow showed him to be tolerably successful. Seizing each of the unfortunate conies he with a smart jerk dislocated its neck, then chucked it over the hedge. Those traps which were found to contain nothing he sprung, else, he said, pheasants would get their legs snapped off,

scraping for food. When he had examined all, he found himself with twelve couples, which he arranged in pairs by means of severing the sinews of the hind-leg of one with the teeth of the other, and drawing the latter's legs through in a style which formed a sort of a knot.

In the daytime with gun and ferrets we killed twenty couples in another part of the ground, and the evening setting in wet and windy, and there being no moonlight, was voted good for snaring. Getting out over a hundred of these fatal little brass loops, Joe stepped from hillock to hillock, planting one down at each point in a run where the wild grass was blowing, and where he knew, from long experience, the rabbits would be galloping about and gambolling. Smartly the work went on, and ere night fell he had the whole hundred over the whole of the hillocky ground, each wavering about neck-high, and undistinguishable from the wild grass. Next morning saw between twenty and thirty rabbits, almost strangled, squealing as they rolled and wriggled at the cords to which the snares are fastened. The same old twist of the neck and system of coupling, and the old rabbit-catcher was off home, quite pleased with the result of his labours, which was far beyond that which the novices who are now allowed to try their hands could have achieved.

Were such men still entrusted with the work it is needless to state that it would be more efficiently done, and with a considerable amount less of cruelty than is now the case. At any rate, if traps are to be allowed to be set in the open as formerly, the law should make it compulsory that they should be examined at sunrise, and sprung where found empty.



THE CRUISE OF THE PEESWEEP.



HELLOA, boys! I'm hanged if here isn't the Jennie lying alongside."

We were a crew of Corinthian yachtsmen, and the shout came from one who held the by no means enviable position of cook and steward. We were bound, we might say, for *anywhere*, and nowhere in particular, having come out to make fair weather of it, and in the Clyde, as most yachting folks know, you need never have a head wind if an anchorage only is wanted. Our boat was the well-known little 10-tonner Peesweep, and we were lying, stormstaded, under the windows of the old White House in the Holy Island in Lamlash Bay. We had been cruising for two days in company with the Jennie, when the fellows on board the latter, in a sort of Viking-like spirit, resolved to visit fresh shores, and went off to round the dreaded Mull of Cantire, and drop their anchor in Belfast Lough. That they were so soon back again rather surprised us, but there could be no doubt whatever as to the craft alongside being the little Jennie, the schooner bow and the cock-up stern showing her to be the wee cross-bred cutter at a glance. Side lights in the rigging indicated that she had run-in in the night time, most likely from up-channel, as the weather was very rough outside, and grey seas came tumbling round the corner of the island at the south entrance in a manner which showed to us plainly that it would be no joke to try and venture in that direction.

"Ahoy! the Jennie, ahoy!" shouted our Corinthian steward, our crew being all amateurs. After a few seconds the lid of the companion was shoved back, and we saw the face of one we well knew cock his head up.

"Been to Belfast yet, eh?" was the second salute from Jenkins, who acted as a sort of cabinboy, all he was capable of doing on board a ship being the setting of the tablecloth.

"Why, I'm hanged if it isn't the old Peesweep," we heard him shout to someone down below.

"Hang his impudence! the old Peesweep," said Jenkins to himself; "the Jennie could be the Peesweep's grandmother. However, we won't quarrel; we'll bring them on board for breakfast, for they won't have much in the locker, and they'll be too sleepy to do much cooking; so rouse up, some of you fellows, and take the punt across to Lamlash, and get hold of some victuals, for there isn't as much as a bit of bread left."

Though the prospects of a row across Lamlash Bay in a yacht's punt when half a gale was blowing, and the spindrift flying in showers, were by no means pleasant to contemplate, we knew we must obey or starve; so while he went forward into the fore-castle, the skipper, as we familiarly termed the owner of our craft, jumped from off his berth on the cabin cushion, to which he had retreated after a peep from the companion, and, quickly dressing himself, was ready to accompany me to the little Arran town to do our shopping. Perhaps there is nothing connected with Corinthian yachting that one likes so much as looking after the ship's stores, the buying of milk, butter, and eggs, let alone the laying-in of the liquor, the bargain-driving with greengrocers, and the searching for the town pump from which to fill the water casks. On this particular morning, however, no one need have envied us the job, for against the head-wind and running sea it took us three-quarters of an hour to make the pier, and we were very glad to seek some comfort and warmth at the Lamlash Arms, where we landed. Visiting the grocer's and the butcher's we soon completed our marketing, the landlady of the Arms kindly supplying us with a pile of oatcakes. The water casks having been filled, we bent to our oars, and very soon were back alongside the Old Green Plover, as the Peesweep was sometimes termed. The bumping of a boat on our ship's side let us know that the Jennie's crew were alongside, and the skipper jumped on deck and welcomed them.

"Will you have breakfast?" cried out Young Wilson, who was literally a passenger, and only useful for opening sodawater.

"Will we have breakfast? will we have supper? will we have anything? I should think so; but come on with some brandy and soda to begin with," was the chorus. "We're eaten out, and we're drunk out, and I don't believe there's as much as a glass of good fresh water on board even. By Jove we've had a fearful time of it outside: indeed it's a wonder we're not all holding on

by the sand at the bottom somewhere between Ailsa and the Mull of Cantire. No more trips to Ireland in the Jennie for me, say I, so if you're on for a cruise in convoy in the Channel here, we'll hang by you for a week. Two's company even in the matter of boats, and I think we'll make fair weather of it at home. Besides, it's too late for the Irish coast, any way; all the regattas are over, and what boats are not away round Land's End for the Solent, are up cruising amongst the Western Highlands. So here we are, and we're game to race the Jennie against the Peesweep for the next three days for dinners, drinks, suppers, anything you like."

"Done with you!" shouted the Steward, as the other buried the half of his weather-beaten face in a tumbler of fizzing yellow mixture. "Let's us make the best of the last of the season cruising canvas, no paid hands, and a fresh anchorage for a rendezvous every night. Breakfast was followed by the soul-soothing pipe, and for good part of the morning our time was devoted to jawing. In the afternoon the wind fell, though there was still a heavy sea running up, and, after a council of our little admiralty had been duly held, we resolved not to get under way till the following morning, when our first day's race was to be a sail as far as Loch Ranza, the cruise to be continued next morning up Loch Fyne as far as Ardrishaig, or down the Sound of Kilbranna, just according to how we found the weather. The evening we spent most happily on shore, and next morning we were ready to start. Who that has awakened upon a nice August morning on board a yacht here can ever forget the lovely scenery which greets his eye on either side when he goes on deck? Behind you are the yellow fields of ripening oats, running away back into purple seas of rich bell-heather, above which are the mist-clad summits of Ben Gnuiss and Goatfell, while before you is the picturesque peak of Holy Island, with its long masses of granite boulders shining in the morning sun, and the dim coast of Ayrshire away over the green Firth of Clyde. Happy is he who has let go his mud-hook midst the boats of the fleet of the Royal Clyde or Royal Northern Yacht Clubs in the evenings of those merry opening and closing cruises, and rushed on deck in the morning to see the eight o'clock gun fired from the Commodore's ship, while burgees are run up to the mast-heads, the band of the Cumberland training-ship striking up "A Life

on the Ocean Wave." Then who can forget those memorable starts, when nineties, sixties, and forties, schooners and cutters, all crowded down to the starting line, filling their canvas to the rain-laden squall which came from the hills, while the "Yeo-he-ho's" of men straining at topsail-halliards were resounding from shore to shore? But a truce to old reminiscences, however happy. The Peesweep and the Jennie are getting ready to start. The reefed bowsprits have been run out and the top-masts set up, and the stays tautened on both, and beyond that there is not much else to do, for cruising canvas only is to be allowed. Jibheaders having been got up on each, and the start having been fixed to take place sharp at eleven o'clock, a friend agreed to give us a five-minutes gun from the right barrel of his fowling-piece at 10.55 to the tick, and the left at the "10.60," over a line between his garden gate and the mainmast of a barque lying at anchor. Then we took a turn down the South Bay to see what the wind was likely to do. Trying our run from a mark on shore we knew when to put about again for a flying start, and, as the five-minutes gun was fired at the garden gate, filled on our right tack, and easing off sheets went down snoring. Almost at the same time our opponent did the same to leeward, but before he could cut across windward, for weather berth, as he wanted, we had our jib over him, and we streamed down to the imaginary line about level. Just as we neared the line a shower, in the heart of which there was a squall, which laid us over till the scuppers were roaring full, made a beautiful arch of a rainbow from the Arran to the Holy Island shore, and with foam flying at the stem, and a white wake churning at the stern, we stemmed the line with the bowsprits' ends just as the second barrel of the gun was fired.

"Ease sheet!" was the call as the squall laid us over, and, with sheets checked a little, we soon travelled through the North Sound, the Peesweep and the old Jennie going as fast as if they were again sailing their maiden races. The latter's best point was reaching, so we were quite content to hold our own, though drop her we could not, and so, with as much as we could stagger under, we held on through the North Sound. Up under the rugged bluffs of the Corriegills we found the wind westerling a little, no doubt drawing more out of Glen Rosa and Brodick Bay, but the pinched sheets were all in our favour,

and the Jennie soon fell astern. Across Brodick Bay, with the wind falling as we went up, we literally rushed through, with but little time to glance at the banner on the walls of the picturesquely situated castle, or watch the puffs of blue smoke which burst out every now and then in the heathery slopes and told of the death of grouse at the hands of the members of the ducal party. Getting under the shadow of Goatfell, the breeze died down softly, and we almost crept past Corrie, while the Jenny closed up, and, much to our chagrin, got a light air all to herself, and slipped away through her lee.

"This is what they call the pleasures of yacht racing," said the Steward, who was taking his trick at the tiller, "when an old scow like that catches hold of a fluke after we have almost left her hull down, and sails almost out of sight. However, the race isn't always to the lucky—whistle, somebody, for wind."

After a time the breeze answered our coaxing, and we were seen streaming along again, and to our great joy found the Jennie in the doldrums off Glen Sannox. Just in the middle of our congratulations, however, our boat came to an even keel also, and, leaving one of the fellows to take care of the stick, we went below to drown our cares in a mouthful and enjoy a pipe. We had just got to discussing the chances of our finishing the race that day when the boat went over with a thrash and going on deck we found her laying over to a fine fresh breeze, and the Jennie just ahead. Fresh wind, fresh life, we were soon at it again as eager and as excited as ever, and with the breeze drawing more ahead as we came up to the Cock of Arran we weathered on our competitor, and with three or four tacks across the Sound fetched up under the old castle of Loch Ranza, a victor by five minutes, after a pretty hard-sailed race. With lights up, however, it was a case of pipes out, resolving to eat our well-won dinner at Campbeltown or Ardrishaig the next day.

LOVE BELOW ZERO.

AN ELOPEMENT ON SKATES.



WE were seated round the large, open fireside of the exceedingly old-fashioned drawing-room of the Castle of Drums, the antique neighbour of an ancient historical building known to all playgoers as Glamis, but which is pronounced "Glawns" by the natives—the castle in which was committed that fearful tragedy with the dagger which planted a rooted sorrow in the mind of Macbeth. Scarcely so old as the days of King Malcolm, Drums was on that memorable Christmas evening of 187—, the year in which our story was told, and some time after the romance happened, a fair specimen of old Scottish architecture—all corners, and turrets, and towers, while the drawbridge and portcullis still remained as in the days when they oft rolled back the tide of war. I say *was*, because the present proprietor is not much of an antiquarian in his tastes, and has built wings all round it, so that in order to get a good view of the old place, you have to get out on to the roof and spend half an hour among the jackdaws, who much prefer as a home an old ivy-clad tower, with its numerous nooks, crannies, and crevices, to the modern chimney-tops of fire-clay, with rattling, wriggling, revolving ventilators, quite as noisy as themselves. The drawing-room at Drums has now been completely changed, and possesses a modern fireside and chimney-piece, æsthetically carved and ornamented ; but let those who were there that happy evening speak out, and they will tell you that they preferred the old-fashioned windows cut loop-hole like into the thick walls, and from which Cupid shot as sharp darts at the soft hearts within as ever did the bowmen of old at the hard hearts of the foemen without. Prefer, too, no doubt, will they the great wide chimney, with its log-laden brazier in the centre, and the sparks hurrying brightly upward as if anxious to be out and rival the stars, with the ruddy weird flame casting its glow over faces which can never look more fair, and countenances which never knew less care.

Ah me! "Christmas comes but once a year, but when it comes it brings good cheer." Well, yes, to many, but sorrow and sickening to some, and memories one would like to dream over all the evening long, voices long, long hushed which sang us the Christmas carols of years ago, the merry laughers who rattled out their Christmas jokes so glibly and so cheerily, and merry faces which in trying hard to recall (just as if they would like to say "A Merry Christmas to you, old fellow") jump out of the log and go away up the chimney, to leave you sad and lonely; and thinking of the fair brow of her you kissed under the mistletoe when you were in your 'teens, but who is now the wife of an old rival and the mother of half-a-dozen as old as she herself was then. Then you think of the lips of another long since cold, and—ah, well! it is no use making Christmas sad because you are left alive.

"What's making old R—— feel so sad?—is it his gout or his gun? Has he been missing all day? He's usually so awfully cheery."

"What's wrong with you, R——, old fellow?" was the query which was fired right off at me in a brusque voice by the young fellow of whom the question was asked. "Pinch of your old friend, the ague; or that letter that came by the cart this afternoon; the house burned down; the mare lame; the banker bolted, or what?"

"Neither, my boy, neither; all's well at home as can be expected, but when you have as many silver threads amongst your gold as I have you will find that old banker, your memory, very much inclined to stay at home and just go over your little account with you. I was thinking of——"

"Tell us what you were dreaming about—some old love affair, eh? Some narrow escape from matrimony—some old Roger de Coverley partner? Do let us have it; it's better for you, you know, to tell it out than dream it inwardly."

As there was quite a chorus of entreaties from all the corners of the apartment, I saw there was no use refusing, and so I essayed to make a beginning:

Fourteen years ago we had one of the most severe winters ever experienced in the British Islands. It started off a dry wind in the end of November, just as folks had begun to get a good true appetite for hunting, and it lasted till the

invitations were out for snowdrops and crocuses in the spring-time. Horses had all grown stale for want of exercise, and hunting men had all gone wrong for want of something to do. Depend upon it a man must have a safety-valve somewhere about to let off the surplus steam, and a fox-hunter somehow should have a couple, as after a winter of long-standing frost the laws that regulate the manners and customs of good society seem to break and burst, like the very water-pipes themselves. Talk about sultry climates indeed ; they're nothing to what our own is when there is two feet of six-weeks-old snow on the ground—the master scowling ; the huntsman growling ; the hounds literally howling, having lost the chord of their woodland tunes ; and the foxes prowling round the hen-roosts as tame as starved cats.

Some of you, I dare say, in fact most of you, have been on Loch Laggan in the summer time, when the green fringes of the pine trees hang low upon its shores, and leave a dainty bit of the inner garment of bluebell and yellow primrose, stealing down modestly to the little wavelets which gently beat upon the pebbly beach. Beautiful as it is then, I do not think it is half so lovely as in winter, and certainly it never looked more lovely during any winter than on that of fourteen years ago. From base to summit the mountains on each side were clad with snow, which, with every hour's advance of the sun, brought out all the colours of the kaleidoscope, and their continued shifting in the glens and corries gave one the idea of a day playing *Aurora Borealis*. Heavy-laden, the boughs of the larches stooped low to the ground with spikelets of sun-thaw shining like crystals, while fretted silver-work as fine as the gossamer which spreads from flower stalk to stalk in the autumn fields, stretched from spray to spray. Gorse, thicket, and hedgerow were all in white—a silent, soundless white, for the babble of the streamlet was hushed, and the feathered minstrels had long been mute—mute in despair, while thinking of happy days in the past summer. Loch Laggan itself was bright as a silver shield, for the frost had not seized hold of it till after the heaviest of the snowstorms had been past, and the thinner showers had been swept before the gale to the banks on each side, just like spindrift before a squall to the seashore. With its ice so strong that it could have carried a full regiment of artillery—men, horses, guns, and all—

without giving the slightest signs of yielding, it was but natural that we should take to skating and the formation of ice-parties. A little of that, and then gala days were proposed, the fellows of the 150th, quartered at G——, twenty miles out, who had just come home from Canada, being anxious to have a taste of the life they had enjoyed the previous winter, while possibly also being desirous of showing off a little of their skating. So arrangements were made for a grand *fête* on one of the little islands. A snow fort was built, and stuck round with castellated spears of ice artificially frozen, and trees were cut and arranged so as to make a good bonfire. Laggan larders and Laggan cellars supplied a large amount of the good things which are more than ever indispensable in frosty weather and a more picturesque sight was never seen than on that merry Boxing Day fourteen years ago, when the band of the 150th, their red coats shining in the sun, played opposite the little snow-formed, ice-barbed fort.

Proudly the Major, who was as grim a veteran as ever wore a sword or squirmed under the gout, drove up and down in a sleigh which was yoked to a favourite Russian thoroughbred which had won more than one race in the ice-trotting matches at St. Petersburg, and which had been sent him as a present from an old Russian officer he had spared in the Crimea.

But, though everyone could not help admiring the style of the turn-out, the eyes of most of the 150th men were directed to his only daughter—a sweet, plump girl of nineteen, who in the daintiest of skating costumes, something quite unique, a dress very much like the kilt of the Laggan tartan, fronted by a sporran, with white shield and foxhead, with stockings of Laggan tartan, red and blue, silver buckles at sides, with cairngorms to match, fur-headed boots, a velvet tunic over a tartan vest or bodice, above and over all a Glengarry bonnet and feather. With large black eyes, a beautiful complexion, neat round features, a nose the least thing *retroussé*, and a form as plump as a November partridge, there is little wonder that more than one fine fellow was frostbitten in the region of the left breast that morning. Over at the little town where they were stationed they felt things go past very slowly; indeed, as I heard one remark, he never saw such a stableful of garrison hacks about a place in his life, and I daresay some of you know what a garri-

son hack is—if you don't, you young fellows will soon find out.

* * * * *

Here my cough began to trouble me most annoyingly, and in order to relieve me for a moment or two, young Jack, with that ease which always characterises a young fellow in his father's drawing-room before strangers, started off with the song of

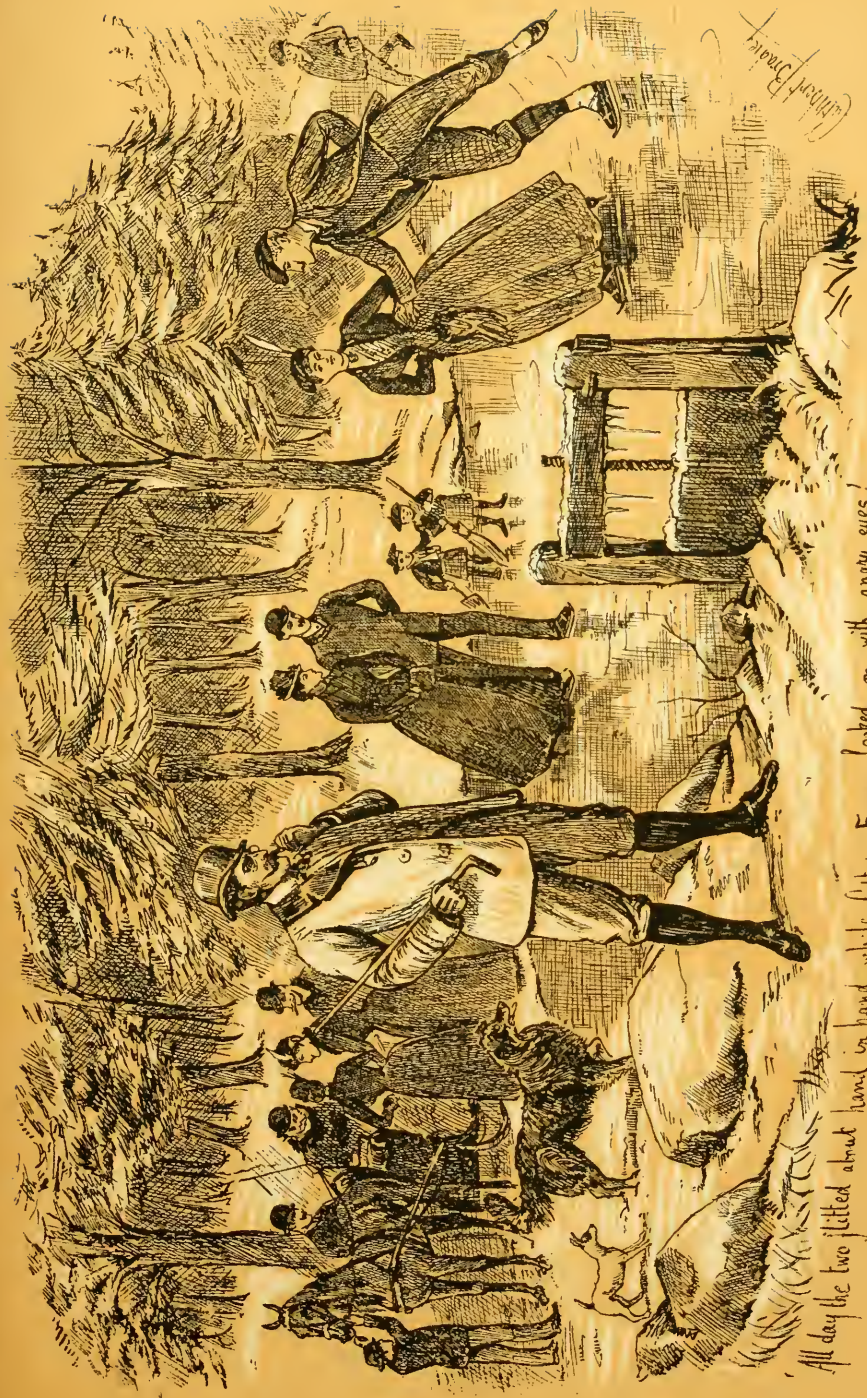
THE GARRISON HACK.

Did ever ye hear of the garrison hack,
 She's a blonde, or brunette, or sometimes a black ?
 As regiments do change she changes her hair,
 And the colour depends on the facings you wear.
 She's golden with gunners, she's fair with Hussars,
 She alters her hue for each bold son of Mars ;
 With the Colonel himself she will play the coquette,
 She can chaff with the surgeon, or flirt with the vet.

Oh ! the garrison hack at the garrison ball
 Has a pace that she suits to the lot of us all ;
 She'll step slow through a set to suit a man's gout,
 Then go off at a galop as smart's threes about ;
 With the best of high action for showing a kilt,
 She suits a big Highlander all to the hilt ;
 E'en with the Marines she will show her heels,
 As she lurches sea-legged through the Lancers Quadrilles.

Though no one remembers the day she was foaled,
 Yet the garrison hack she never grows old ;
 For you may be in barracks, in camp, or in dock.
 Or marching all over or stuck on "The Rock,"
 It matters not where, for as soon as you're back,
 You'll be met on the pier by the garrison hack.
 Oh ! there may be a wrinkle or two in her face,
 But she still has her tongue, and she's not lost her pace.

Oh ! the garrison hack's seen many a campaign,
 Hard, hard has she fought a husband to gain ;
 She's bombarded a man who blockaded a port,
 She's laid siege to a man who has oft stormed a fort ;
 Half-way to the altar, on purpose to wed,
 Some leaders of forlorn hopes, too, she has led.
 But a half-bodied "Sub.," who draws his half-pay,
 Poor thing ! she now limps alongside of to-day.



All day the two flitted about hand in hand while (Lillian Evans looked on with angry eyes.)

(Lillian Evans)

Well, any change from the company of the chameleon-like lady in your song, you may be certain, was gladly welcomed : There was one of our party, however, who could have wished the whole of the 150th fellows at the bottom of the loch, and this was Evans—Captain Evans, from the land of leeks, to whom the fair daughter of the Laird was engaged. He was a big ruddy-faced fellow, tall and straight, with very even features, and was what, indeed, most people would call handsome. He was very reserved in his manner, and was generally voted silent, though some said that he thought a great deal the time he was holding his tongue. Good with a gun or a bat, or even across country, he was no good on skates and it was almost pitiable to see him completely at the mercy of his steel-shod feet, tumbling and staggering over the ice while all the others were gliding about so nimbly backward and forward, on inside or outside edge, doing the cross roll, and, indeed, moving about as gracefully as swallows on a summer's evening. Best of all the skaters was Young Shiskan, who had won several of the prizes for fancy skating in the Canadian rink matches in the previous winter, and was considered as good on the ice as any of the natives in that country. With the fair heiress of Laggan he was much taken, and there could be no doubt whatever that, though he had determined to be a bachelor all his life, being a keen horseman, he was fairly smitten. All day the two flitted about together hand-in-hand and with hands at times crossed, while Evans, afraid to move lest he should fall, looked on with angry eyes from afar. They even waltzed together to the music, tried to cut out each other's initials linked together in monogram-fashion on the ice, and, to make a long story short, when the sun died down in the western horizon, and the hour of parting came, Young Shiskan and Miss Laggan of Laggan were madly in love with each other—at least, so they thought.

The next day the former dropped on to the ice as if by accident, and the next, and the next again ; and then I saw, and I think so did Evans and the old Major himself, that things were getting serious.

I was standing one evening late amongst the laurels close to the lake, when I heard the unmistakable ringing of skates on the ice, and, looking out, saw a dark form come sweeping forward like a heron skimming the water at twilight. A red

spot glowed on the top, and I knew that the figure was not that of one of the servants about the place ; it was a gentleman, and he was smoking a cigar. It could not be Evans, for I knew he could not skate, and any who could skate I had left in the billiard-room. I put the stopper in my pipe, and crept back into the laurels, determined to see what it meant. Steadily the figure approached, till it was between me and the last red light of the sinking sun, and then I saw unmistakably it was Shiskan. "Ho, ho!" I said to myself; "this is to be a moon-light serenade. I wonder what Evans or the old man would say to this." Flinging away his cigar, the young Sub. flung himself on to the outside edge of his right skate and ran gracefully to land. "What next?" thought I to myself. "Something on the guitar?" But no; a low whistle, such as the sentinel curlew gives when first disturbed, was all that broke the silence. In a minute it was answered by the placing of a light in the window of Miss Laggan's room. Shiskan then began to whistle a tune with which I was familiar, but for the life of me could not name. It was the tune of a Canadian skating song which I had heard him singing once in the little snow fort on the island.

* * * * *

Another violent fit of coughing here checked me, and one of my fair hearers came to my relief by singing the skating song which I had forgotten, and which runs as follows :

COME UPON THE ICE, LOVE.

Pale are now the moonlit hills, snow-wreaths deck the bough,
 Crystals white are hanging bright from the cascade's brow ;
 Keen has woo'd the frosty knight, Nature's in a trance,
 Fairies gay, with footsteps light, 'neath the moonbeams dance.
 So come upon the ice, love, gaily let us glide,
 Fleeting o'er the icy floor, gaily side by side ;
 Skating 'neath the bright moonlight, so gentle and so free,
 Come upon the ice, love, and glide along with me.

Above, the sky is clear, love, the water's pure below,
 The icy floor is strong, love, untarnished is the snow ;
 As cold now blows the breeze, love, so warms my blood to thine—
 The wind it ne'er can freeze, love, between thy heart and mine.
 So come upon the ice, love, &c.

Then through the world together, love, as o'er the icy plain,
Let's hand and hand ne'er sever, love, nor heart and heart go twain :
The circlings of our skates, love, our love they shall reveal,
The ringing of our skates, love, shall be our wedding peal.
So come upon the ice, love, gaily let us glide,
Fleeting o'er the icy floor, gaily side by side ;
Skating 'neath the bright moonlight, so gentle and so free,
Come upon the ice, love, and glide along with me.

A few minutes after Shiskan had ceased whistling the tune, I saw the figure of a lady come round one of the corners of the castle and, after once looking behind, approach in the direction from which she had heard the whistle. Somehow she moved as if in irons, and I could not well make it out. She certainly walked with anything but the grace of the daughter of the Laird. Miss Laggan, however, it was, for in a few minutes afterwards I heard her address her serenader as Jack. She was more than usually heavily attired, even for an evening walk, and the cause of her ungraceful style of action was her skates, which Shiskan bent to strap more firmly. As he did so, I heard him say, "The night is going to be clear, the ice is keen, and we can do it in an hour. Once at Binnock station and we are as safe as if we were at Euston, London, to-morrow morning."

"Gracious heaven!" said I to myself, "this is a serious business. They mean to elope."

What was to be done? Burst upon the couple, or go and inform the father? Wiser thoughts came to my assistance. Let things alone, I said to myself; you are not supposed to be here.

"Lose no time," I heard the fair one say; "Papa has been suspicious for a few days, and I think some good-natured friend has told him to be on the look-out, as he has Mazeppa always standing ready to put into the sleigh." I heard no more save the clear ringing of their skates as, hand-in-hand, they struck out on to the open loch, then bent to the right under the shadow of the yew trees which fringed a peninsula. "A nice business this for a cold night!" I said to myself, not knowing what to say or think, "and a bonnie kettle of fish there will be to boil in the morning."

Reaching the castle by a back way, I had just got to the front entrance when the Major burst forth, with the foam at

his mouth. There was no doubt about it, the escape had been discovered, and there stood the discoverer, the head gamekeeper, who had witnessed a serenade a previous evening, and been on the watch ever since.

"You say the train leaves Binnock sharp at nine, Wilson, and catches the London mail at Storrs Junction?"

"It does, sir," was the reply.

"Then ere they reach Binnock we must overtake them, that is all. Ho! there; what keeps you with the mare?"

As he spoke the tinkling sound of sleigh bells was heard, and Mazeppa, hard driven by a groom, came round the corner. Tossing aside the wraps, the Major, without a word, motioned me to jump in, and the word he kept he gave to the mare; it was in Russe, and was one used on the trotting ice tracks of the Russian capital. Sweeping the lawn, and smashing the snow from the laurels, we dashed down the brow and on to the ice, close to where the two started out on their romantic journey. No whip was wanted for the well-bred mare, one of the most noted from the private haraz of a distinguished Russian nobleman. Forward she sprang till every sound re-echoed amongst the hills, while the bells tinkled as furiously as if rung for the fire that was bursting from her eyes and the eyes of the driver. Before the light breeze clouds of snow, which were raised by her hoofs and the shoes of the sleigh, swept away to leeward as, spectre-like, we dashed onward. Halting not in our speed, we rounded a bend in the loch, just as the first of the moon peeped out from beneath a cloud, and there we saw ahead the figures of two persons close together, while far away in the foreground we could discern the railway lights at Binnock.

"We will catch them yet," hissed the old warrior through his teeth, as with loosened reins he encouraged the little mare, which almost flew along the surface of the ice. Nearer, nearer, and nearer still we closed on them, till I could see that they saw they were being pursued. How I wished them to go faster every time the Major urged on the mare, but it was of no avail. Poor young Shiskan and his fair companion were evidently to be caught. With her left hand grasped in his, the young soldier launched out his feet right and left in long, strong sweeps, to which the heiress tried well to keep time; though doubtless, poor girl, she must have been well tired. Their flowing, freezing

breath against the Binnock lights I could fairly see in clouds, hanging in the frozen air ; the ringing of their skates was sharp, distinct, and metallic, and I could make out their every stroke ; but the grey-haired, grey-maned steed of Russia was not to be beaten, and so we closed till we were within 150 yards of them.

At that point we could see a long black line stretching out between them and the station.

"It is the course of the Binnock burn unfrozen," said the Major ; "that they cannot cross. Good God ! they are going to try to leap it !" was his next call, and half alarmed that he would press them to it, he raised up the mare till she slid along the ice. She was too late. I heard Shiskan say, "Together ! Now—whoop !" and with a bound they landed on the other side. Ere the Major had recovered his breath, and set the mare a-going again, we could see them clambering up the steps beyond to the station. As we could not follow, we had to try half a mile round ; but before we had crossed half that distance the train moved slowly out, Shiskan having prevailed upon the driver, seeing there were no other passengers, it being a terminus, to move on to the next station.

That they got to Euston and were married in due time I need not tell you. All I know is that old Laggan caught a cold that night, and died of it a fortnight afterwards, leaving the estate to the girl.

* * * * *

"And of course it ended like all other Christmas stories," said young Jackanapes from the corner, "didn't it ? Peace, joy, happiness, and all that."

"Well, no, alas ! Poor Jack ! He fell——"

"While gloriously leading his men at Kassassin ?" asked one of my fair hearers.

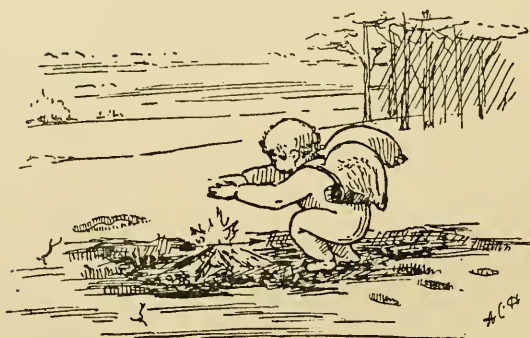
"Majuba Hill, was it not ?" asked another, with tears in her big, soft eyes, as I tried to recover from my coughing.

"He fell while leading the field on the back of the favourite," I continued ; "and as he was carried home on a hurdle his wife bolted from the stand with the very man she jilted, Captain Evans, the Welshman !"

"The jade !" said horsey old Noggins, from the corner, who had been a silent and attentive listener. "I'd have put her in a

selling race for £20 if I had had her, and squared the remainder. What did Shiskan do? Divorce her, eh?"

"No, he did not. He merely sent Evans a kind note, saying that the course of true love never did ride smooth, and all that sort of thing; that if the old horse he was riding had kept his legs, he would have been glad to have seen him off; that he would send her some of her head-gear and stable fittings; and consider the thing square; and wished him all success, though he thought matrimony was far too long a course for a mare of such high mettle; and that he was certain she wouldn't stay. You see it was just as I tell you: when the thaw came she burst up completely, which shows the danger to all of making Love below Zero.



A DAY AFTER WOOD-PIGEON.

OWADAYS, when so much is said about the shooting of tame pigeons, a few experiences after the wild doves of the woods may not come amiss, even though the sport, like the pie, should lack the gamey flavour of the pheasant. Perhaps, too, pheasant shooting nowadays is a sport more ideal than real, for the time has long gone past when the sin of missing a woodcock was only equalled by that of hitting a hen—of course I mean a hen pheasant; for, although I have flushed a lady woodcock off her eggs in Scotland, authorities say that it has as yet been found impossible to discover a male from a female. That is, however, beside the question. Keepers have been busy herding the proud birds of the forest into nice little warm corners for battues, and in a few days all London will be hanging with “prime Indian corn-fed birds” from the preserves of the greatest sportsmen in the country. At Smithfield, as soon as a prime fed heifer has won a cup—in her moment of victory when she is being handled and fondled by an admiring public—someone steps forth from the crowd and hangs up to her admiring gaze, that “this beast has been bought by so-and-so, the eminent butchers, and will be killed on such and such a date.” Possibly some of the pheasants which are on their way to cover now will have some similar tickets on their hampers, and rejoice at the prospect of their being early despatched. At any rate, we will not stand to be laughed at because our modest sporting fare is wood-pigeon, which, if not game, bears at least this charm in our eyes, that it was bred naturally and reared wild.

Having had good sport at the wild rooks on the North coast as they swept out like flashes of light from the shelves of their nesting-ground, I thought I would like one real good day at wood-pigeon; not that I had not killed wood-pigeons before, for I have knocked down many a one of them. They were to be found in the fields in my neighbourhood in thousands, having come in from the woodlands to feed on the seeds of the yellow

mustard, that noxious weed which bothers the farmer on sandy lands, and anything they could find left over from the harvest. It has been contended by farmers that though the rook does some work for his living in way of destroying grub, the wood-pigeon is simply a gluttonous thief, which thinks of nothing but filling his capacious crop, either at seed-time from the sown grain, or in harvest from the stalks, which he thrashes with his wings, or the standing stooks. That is not, however, altogether the case. Few birds we know there are that do not do some good, and so the wood-pigeon, when starving in winter, picks up and destroys a large number of noxious seeds which, if left in the ground, would do much harm. Farmers are, however, very ignorant, as a rule, of the foods of the birds on their lands, and a few years ago I recollect the actual shooting of a young curlew perched on a rye sheaf; and the opening of its crop, which contained insects with which the heads of the grain were alive convinced the farmer of his error, and let him know that the bird was his friend, and not his robber.

It was while the pigeons were busy at this good work, I am sorry to confess, that I set out to make a bag of them. All, however, I daresay, that I got that day would never be missed from amongst them, as the field in which they were feeding was literally covered with them, while there were flights continually going and coming from the nearest woodland. The cartridges I had with me were all loaded with wood powder; not that it would give me any special advantage in the using of my second barrel, but from previous experience in stalking wild fowl, which are of a non-migratory nature, and keep circling round, I found that the puffs of blue smoke were but the flags which I, in man o' war style, had fired a gun to "call attention to signal," and that birds which might have come over me sheered off. In the days of breechloaders, when you can load without rising into view, this is a great advantage, either when stalking or when lying in wait.

It was close upon ten o'clock when I sallied out with my farmer and host—who carried me a bit out of his way in order to let me have a look at some favourite Clydesdales and Ayrshires, those milk-making Jerseys of the north—he carrying a single-barrelled muzzle-loader, into which, as he said, in order to put himself on something like equal terms with me, he would put

"'twa chairges o' shot." And such shot! oh, dear! "What in all the world is that you have got hold of?" was my exclamation as he pulled out from his trousers pocket a handful of gnarled grey and silver looking stuff.

"Just the very stuff for them," was the reply, "bits off the pump-spout."

Bits off the spout of the pump they certainly were, dead, ugly, three-cornered nuggets of slugs, which made a man shudder.

"This is the coin Paddy pays his rents with," he said with a laugh, "but we use it here for cushie (cushet) doos, and if you wait here you'll see how it will sort them."

As, however, he measured his powder in something like the same fashion, from his left trousers pocket, as he did the "bits off the pump," I resolved to give him a wide berth at firing time, and choose a path of my own. A farmer's gun is never the cleanest kept, it must be borne in mind, and is always considered, like the farm engine boiler, to be quite strong enough till it bursts. As he refused the offer of some shells which I wished to cut in two at the junction of powder and shot, or just over the first wad, I said that I would prefer a good flying shot at them, and if he would get close up to them on the far side of the field, he would be sure to drive them over to me. This arrangement he most heartily acquiesced in, and we parted.

Watching him disappear out of view behind an unmortared stone wall, along the back of which he crouched, I leaped a narrow ditch and got under cover of a thin straggling hedge, which ran almost parallel. The hawthorn, however, had found the soil not very nutritious, and as manure they think is far too precious in the North to waste at the foot of the hedgerows, it was anything but a good specimen of a fence, the different bushes seeming all to wear an air of stiffness to each other, and refuse to join hands. There was one grand big aristocratic bush, however, about a hundred yards off, which seemed just to be the sort of place I wanted, and by dint of hard, careful crawling and the use of a furrow on the headland, I succeeded in reaching my vantage point.

Getting as close in to the root as I could, I could perceive about half-a-dozen great big wild croppers moving about indus-

triously, and quartering their ground like well-bred pointers, in search of seeds. They were, however, well out of range, for the wood-pigeon is not very easily killed in winter, more especially when feeding or flying towards you, as his breast is as strong as a shield. There was nothing to be done but to sit still and wait till they would come a little nearer, so I resolved to be patient for the pigeon. Somehow the pigeon is very unsuspecting, and not nearly so wakeful as other wild birds. I was just preparing for them when up they went with a flutter, and at the same time, from the far-side of the field, came the report of my friend's gun, and some of the "bits off the pump" whistled past inconveniently close. I held for the near bird of the flight as they swung close to my hiding-place, but notwithstanding that I shook him up with both barrels he held on to the woodland, though several times I saw him reel, steady and recover, no doubt feeling anxious to die in the company of his friends if death was to overtake him. With many a whoop and waving of dead, my entertainer rejoined me, having put his full dose of shot into a bluish-grey flock of them so well that he picked up half-a-dozen. Why had I missed? That was an easy question. My bird was not close enough within range.

"Ha, ha, ha!" was his rejoinder, "you had no powder in your gun. I could see that easy by the smoke."

As it was of little use explaining to him that my powder was a peculiar kind and almost smokeless, I was forced to accept an exchange, as he would like to try a shot with "ane o' these new-fashioned dandy guns." Fortunately his was still empty; had it been loaded by himself I must have felt bound to decline. As it was, I declined his powder, and cut up a shell, using some of his three-cornered shot. Separating again, I waited and waited, but no pigeons seemed to come somehow, and I was left to moralise on the old days of muzzle-loaders, and think of pleasant old memories—memories somehow which made me wish that breechloaders were never invented. Visions of eager setters crouching in the heather came up, of times when the heel of the stock rested on the toe of our left foot, and we rammed a well-fitting wad home with that pleasant sensation which only can be compared to the feel of a well-hooked fish, or the mouth of a well-broken horse. So as I waited, I hummed out the song of—

THE GOOD OLD GUN FOR ME.

My locks are grey—I've seen my day—
And my old gun locks are worn ;
But my eye is keen, and she still shoots clean,
As on that August morn
When the covey sprang, and her voice first rang,
And we saw our first brace fall ;
And we stood to load, with the old ramrod,
As "Down charge !" was the call.
You may load—click, click !—with your new guns quick,
But sights you ne'er will see ;
As, with eager face, the crouching brace
Watched the good old gun and me.

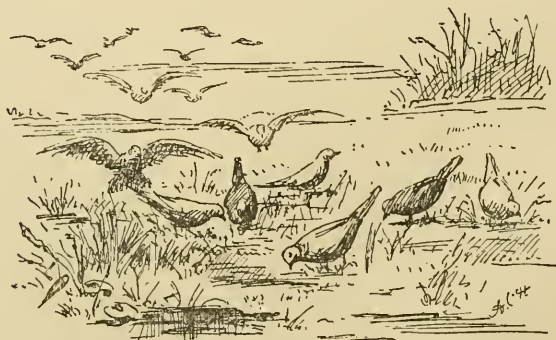
Loudly they preach, and praise the breech—
They may do so till they're dumb—
Rebounding locks, and hammerless stocks,
But I like the comb in my thumb.
When the gun I shook, at the nipple I'd look,
To see if the powder was down ;
And I felt as blessed, when the cap I pressed,
As if I'd gained a crown.
Oh, well may they boast, but a pleasure they've lost
Although they may talk so free—
'Twas to load a gun as it then was done,
Oh, the good old gun for me.

Few shots we spent, but were content
Our modest bag to fill,
In present days and modern ways,
Their whole desire's to kill.
For a surer shot to fill the pot,
They now half tame their game ;
We care no fig, for bags so big
Ne'er means a surer aim.
So the powder-flask, the old shot belt
And ramrod, drink all three ;
The old gun wad, the old gun cap,
And the good old gun for me.

At last the pigeons began to come fluttering out from the woodlands, first by twos and then by threes, till the field was

well covered. Once or twice I could have had two or three at a time, but I wanted a nice good flying swipe at one of them. At last I stood up to half-a-dozen which were feeding thirty-five yards away, and let go on the left one. Down, however, went a bird a good ten feet to the right while the other went on strong. Suspecting that my companion must have been just looking over my shoulder I looked round with surprise, expecting to find him, but no ! I was just in time to see him deliver both barrels without effect at a passing flight. Walking over and picking up the dead I found that one of the "bits off the pump" had gone right through its head, and then recollected his remark that the grand thing about his shot was that it *scattered*. When he rejoined me he was loud in his condemnation of my weapon and the style of loading it, and would not believe in its killing powers till I showed him what it could do with the sole of an old boot he stuck up at forty yards.

In the after part of the day, by dodging round, I got some capital rising, and also side-wing shots, when in full flight. In the evening I got in amongst the trees when they were out feeding, and after the single barrel had warned them home got several good shots as they came in to settle on the branches. Altogether, though I never shall make such a wide miss and such a clever hit with the same shot, I shall not forget my day amongst the wood-pigeon.



THE NETHERLANDS CUP RACE AT COWES.



COWES, the little capital of the Solent, the Goodwood of the water, never looks more gay than when, in the second week of August, Society, tired of its *fêtes* and festivities, its morning rides in the Row, and its afternoon strolls in the Park, resolves to pay it a visit, and have a little of the garish complexion of the gaslight washed away by the salt sea spray ; and the bloom renewed by a breath of the bright, fresh air which blows in from the Channel, and down over the woods of the fair Isle of Wight. And never was Cowes more gay than it was in the first week of August, 1883. The Queen was at Osborne, and Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales, together with the youthful Princesses, had come down to favour that regatta, which, since the days of Waterloo, when the patriotic men connected with the fleet formed the premier club, the Royal Yacht Squadron, has been recognised as the most fashionable and interesting aquatic gathering of a nation which claims to rule the waves. Many and many a grand match has been sailed since those early days in the Solent, and many and many a change has been made in the type and rig of the competing vessels. Broad bluff bows have disappeared, as have the sails which the proud poets of the day sung as “bellying beautifully to the wind,” but which would have been talked of by modern racing-men as bagging like an unmentionable balloon ; and so with them have disappeared the ancient blow-hard school of mariners who could talk ship from masthead to keel. How these men would have looked when they saw from the club-windows the narrow hulls, straight bowsprits, tall spars, and straight-carried sails of modern days tearing past them at a rate which would have astonished the proudest owners of the hookers of an older day, which in a long stern run seemed according to the opinions of those novelists who wrote the romances of their time, to be the fastest boats that it was possible for man to build. The days of Paul Jones, Long Tom Coffin, and others of the schoolboy’s heroes have long gone, but

though steam has taken the sails out of their wind, to reverse a familiar expression, there still survives, amongst true-bred shore-born and sea-born Britons, a love of a boat with

“A wet sheet, and a flowing sea,
And a wind that travels fast.”

Indeed, it is gratifying to notice that during the past few years this love of sailing has been on the increase, notwithstanding the Sybaritic attractions of the huge floating palaces, some of which are bigger than our ocean-going Transatlantic liners of twenty years ago; much more powerful in a seaway, and twice as safe and as comfortable. But the sea-dogs of Cowes, Kings-town, Clyde, and other yachting resorts sing with Tennyson, “Comfort, comfort, scorned of devils,” and prefer a real good bucketing and a drenching of salt water, to a snug sofa in the richly-fitted cabin of a big steamboat.

In the snug little town all the talk was highly nautical. The man who did not know a schooner from a yawl was a nobody, while the man who could cast his memory furthest back, and a bit beyond, and tell you, “sir, yes, sir, I remember the America schooner, sir, when she came over, sir, and the Titania, ay, bless you, sir, and that day when the Prince out there was a little lad at his father’s knee, in white flannels, sir,” was a man to gather a knot of younger ones round him at a street corner, as a hero and a veteran to be listened to and gazed at with admiring wonder. Here and there one would come across a name that brought back to racing yachtsmen the pleasantest of memories—memories of old friends, old breezes, the very puffs of which were not forgotten, and anxious moments watching for starting and for winning guns. There, with his name woven in white on his breast, is one of the crew of the once-famous Clyde clipper Kilmeny; here, in red, is a man belonging to the famous Belfast flyer, Quickstep, and as we look round we read that once-magic word Fiona, the terrible yachting namesake of the heroine of Ossian, the bride of Fingal. All have had their day, but their names in yachting circles, no more than those of numerous others, can readily be forgotten.

But while we watch, we miss the stir that is going on at the Royal Yacht Squadron Clubhouse. Here are the brave yachtsmen assembled, and here the fair which the brave deserve, or have already been rewarded with. Tall men in blue serge

occupy the balcony next the sea, each carrying a telescope, the binocular being still despised by the old-fashioned school of sailors as only fit for landsmen to look through ; the ladies, less fond of looking at the canvas which the boats are carrying than at their own, remain by their wicker chairs on the green lawn, as much at sea possibly as they care to be, either in a nautical sense or with regard to a knowledge of what is going on. But some are there who are fond of the water, and so every now and then a stately cutter, with a fair one at the yoke-lines, pulls off to some big craft in the bay, while steam-launches puff and blow with screws squirming in the water in every direction. Less difficult to describe than the costumes of Goodwood, the Cowes ones are still bothersome to those unacquainted with the millinery art, and the sailor who pointed out one with a tucked skirt as carrying a double-reefed mainsail, was no doubt somewhat so perplexed.

But the real salts are interested only in the sailing, and the racing boats have been gradually getting ready for the race. They have "weighed out," as a turf frequenter would say, and are now weighing anchor. It is an anxious time on board each vessel, as the crew know hard work will soon commence ; their song of their day is—

With a strong man here and a stout man there,
The mainsail up we're riding ;
And a pull, pull here, and a pull, pull there,
The topsail up we're sliding.
And a click, click here, and a tick, tick there,
For the line, my boys, we're sailing.
Then we get the gun and begin the fun
As the boat bends down to the railing.
With a tack, tack here, and a tack, tack there,
For the weather berth we're trying.
With a puff, puff here, and a luff, luff there,
To windward now we are flying.
Now we gybe right round and we're homeward bound,
And for Commodore we are laying.
We've the winning gun, and the cry's " Well done !"
And now we are hip-hooraying.

Possibly the yacht which achieved most distinction in the early part of the week was Lord Ailsa's little Sleuthhound, which

secured, as she did last year, the cup given by Her Majesty the Queen, and that against a fleet of far more powerful vessels. Though not so fast as the other 40-tonners, she has won many good races, and the pluck with which her owner has sailed boats in the 40-ton class for the past eleven years made her victory a popular one. The crack racing-vessels of the fleet are, of course, *Samœna*, *Marjorie*, and *Miranda*, together with the 40-tonners *May*, *Tara*, *Silver Star*, and *Annasona*. The Cowes Town Cup is a very much coveted trophy, and it resulted in a good race between the rival cutter *Samœna* and *Marjorie*, the latter finishing only 46 seconds outside of her time allowance, although the former would have finished much further ahead had she not parted her jib halliards in the course of the second round.

Next morning saw the commencement of the most interesting sailing matches of the week, there being down on the programme a cup, value £300, presented to R.Y.S yachts by the King of the Netherlands, while a prize of £150 was presented by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales and Lord Londonderry for vessels above 30 tons belonging to non-squadron members. A hard breeze blowing all morning, the two latter, which had to go off first, hauled down a single reef in their mainsails and housed topmasts, and with the yawl *Neptune*, third starter, tore down to the mark in the last minute, each manœuvring for weather berth. Their jockeying made them reckless of their time. They crossed too soon, were recalled and sent on again, the Scotch cutter leading. In the run up, with spinnakers to the masthead and small jib-headers up, *Samœna* early got past her rival, and after that was in front all day. There is not space in a sketch to describe their sailing, but in the beat down to Yarmouth, in which both worked the far shore, was seen some of the hardest and finest sailing of the 1883 season. About and about they went in the long, dead thrash, the well-peaked mainsail of *Samœna* being seen disappearing in the heavy haze of the shower blasts, while *Marjorie* was coming off on starboard, her mainsail shining in a golden sunset. In the run up the latter made on her opponent somewhat, but could never get within winning distance, and the former had the £150, the best prize for one of the best-sailed races of the season.

An hour after they start, is begun one of the races which will ever be remembered in Cowes. The blasts have not softened

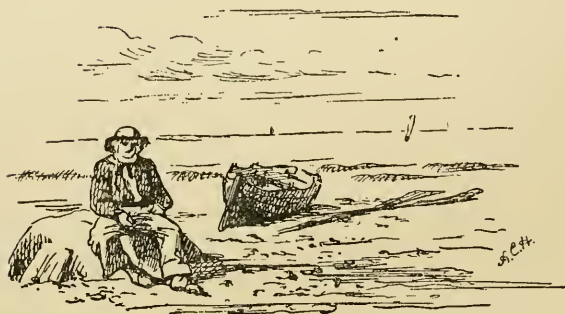
much when Waterwitch, Cetonia, Lorna, Corinne, Sleuthhound, and the Aline, on which flies the Royal Feathers of the Prince, get under way and go out to do battle for the Netherlands trophy.

The crowd have gathered by the flagstaff where the signalman stands ready to shift colours should the guns refuse to go off; the officer of the day keeps a look-out with telescope in hand under the shade of the little corner-portico of the clubhouse, and the four minutes of the five from the first gun have ticked slowly off, when, with a squall tearing up grey from a dark cloud which hangs right across, Cetonia gybes to starboard, and Sleuthhound, with the watchful Diaper, shoots up for a lead and a clear weather berth. Slowly the seconds tick out, while anxious eyes can be seen through the binocular straining club-ward for the signal, while their timekeepers stand with deck watch or chronometer in hand. Many a time have we felt such moments, and our hearts are almost on board. The officer on duty, who has retreated momentarily before the shower, which has caused the crowd to scamper to leeward, reappears; the first gunner has affixed his lanyard, and the second beyond has followed his example. The officer's telescope is gradually raised from forty-five degrees to almost a right angle; the lanyards on the guns are correspondingly stented, and the flag signalman almost bends his weight on the halliards. The telescope is lowered, the gun goes with a roar, the yellow flag is run up, and in the thrash of the shower Cetonia eases off sheets and goes off across the line, followed by Sleuthhound and Corinne, Waterwitch and Lorna, Aline being last. In the long hard run and reach to the Nab there is much incident and much excitement; the little Sleuthhound sticking to her opponents like the faithful hound she is named after in the trail of a wounded stag. Back down again by the Calshot to Yarmouth, bursting through northering blasts Cetonia leads the way, followed by Waterwitch and Lorna, and the little Sleuthhound hanging to them all. It is a tearing run home after the long hard beat, the schooners bursting masses of foam o'er their bows, as the rain showers come chasing up behind them. Cetonia maintains her position, and Waterwitch and Lorna follow, but the Hound is going breast high to a strong scent. With boom eased off to starboard she races

home, and not needing spinnaker, which was once essayed, she wins the best prize which was ever sailed for on British waters by two minutes and a half.

Never did hound on burning trail
Run so hard as this Hound did sail ;
Ne'er did boat yet sail the sea,
Sail so bold and so gallantly.

And sailors all will answer the call,
When each regatta-time comes round.
And make the roof ring for Netherlands' King,
And his Cup which was won by the brave Sleuthhound.



A DAY'S RABBIT SHOOTING.



T is February, and the partridges are stealing up the sides of the hedgerows, or in little slow-moving groups working up and down the furrows of the wheat stubble lands, now green with grass; free under the law, though yet liable to be lifted by the callous-hearted poacher. The pheasant, too, has an undisturbed range of the covert, though he has to keep a watch on sly Master Reynard; and shooting may well be considered over for the season, save for the mischief-making little rabbit, about which there has been so much legislation and wrangling between landlord and tenant in recent times. But while waiting between partridges and trout, one who loves rod and gun could not wish for better sporting fare indeed, if rabbits are strong, plentiful, and bolting well before the ferrets. Of course it has to be borne in mind that rabbit shooting in one part of the country may be quite different from rabbit shooting in another, and that in some places people do not care at all for it. Woodland rabbits bred inland, for instance, are much softer than rabbits bred on sandy gorse knolls where the herbage is scant, and are much more easily shot. They do not as a rule bolt rapidly, but come hopping out of the mouths of the holes and sit down quietly at times, as if wondering what part of the country to make for. It is possibly for this style of shooting for which Colonel Hawker says the sportsman should get up a tree. The hardest rabbits are bred on sandy hills near a sea shore, and the best shooting one can have at such is on the Firth of Clyde coast, which for miles is one huge rabbit-warren, the hills clad with flowing bent being literally honeycombed with rabbit-holes. Those who "shot small-bore" under Captain Horatio Ross for the Scottish Eight will recollect some parts of this country, as will those who now practise for the same on almost the same range which is now held privately by Mr. R. M. M'Kerrell, of Hillhouse, the well-known rifle shot, and on whose estate, a

couple of rifle-shots off, is always to be found some of the best rabbit shooting in the north country.

Possibly the best time for rabbit shooting is in the end of November or beginning of December, ere the trapper has been over the ground, and the young of the latest litters, the half-grown ones of September, are hardy, full-sized, and full of life and activity. Still, if snares and gins have not been too deadly, owing to the setting in of frost, a capital day's sport can be had over the ferrets till well on to March, though a good deal depends on the openness of the season.

Such a day we enjoyed but a short time ago, in the neighbourhood mentioned. Breakfasting early and well, we sallied out to the appointed place of rendezvous, where we found, sharp to the hour, the gamekeeper with his little green-painted box over his back, accompanied by a lad who carried a similar one, also a spade, for digging out, as ferrets will lie up under the most favourable conditions, or go to sleep comfortably beside some dead one that has succeeded in dragging its riddled carcase within the hole.

"Good mornin', gentlemen," is the salute, "you have brought a very nice mornin' with you, though I was afraid it was goin' to snaw, and rabbits never like to bolt if they think there's goin' to be snaw, ye ken. They're queer things, rabbits; sometimes they'll come quicker than you can load and fire, and sometimes they will not bolt at all."

"I suppose that depends a good deal on the ferrets, Donald," was the remark of my companion.

"Not so much as you think. I have as good working ferrets as is to be found in the country, and even open-mouthed, let alone muzzled, I have seen them beat at times. If a fox has been hanging about all night nothing will make them leave the hole, and I've bolted a fox with a muzzled ferret too; the foxes can't stand a ferret's smell, and the rabbits are the same way, I think. However, here we are at one of our best burrows, and we'd better put on the muzzles."

Opening the box he carried himself, he seized a large brown and yellow dog ferret, as heavy as a hare, and sitting down on his box commenced to force open his mouth with the point of a lead-pencil. Having muzzled many a one for him in my day, I laid down my gun, took hold of the proffered wax-end, made



Missed with the right! stop him with the left Sir!

see page 137.

a "grannie's" knot in the middle of it, slipped it over the under-jaw, brought it over the top of the other, and, knotting it, carried it up between his ears, where, fastening it again, I carried it round his neck and made him secure. He did not, of course, seem to like it, but after rubbing his nose against the bottom of the box, contented himself, and resolved to bear with the nuisance. Two others we muzzled the same way, and a couple of young ones and an old dam, small, but keen and active, we let go free, the latter's teeth being so short that she could not possibly have held a rabbit supposing she tried.

The ferrets having been got to rights, we moved over to the burrow, a round hillock, which was full of holes, some long and red, with newly-scraped sand, and some round and cosy-looking at the foot of brent bushes. We then took our positions.

The brown dog ferret was dropped into a hole on the far side, another in a hole a few yards off, and one of the young ones in a corner hole, not in a hap-hazard fashion, but after a keen examination of the lay of the land by the man, and some apparent slight consultation with his memory, for he had ferreted that same burrow for years, and knew very well how the holes were connected. Silence, strict silence, being the rule, no sound was made, save the clicking of our gun-locks as we backed them to half-cock. Then we heard some ominous thumping and rumbling, which was followed by the whisper from old Donald that "they had lifted her." Another ominous thump, almost under our feet, was followed by Coney, who, with a race like the first rush of a two-year-old on the fall of the flag, made right for a burrow lying 50 yards off. My friend was a little smarter than I was myself, I having been finishing leisurely a cigar, and got—serve me right—a cloud of smoke in my eyes at the very moment they should have been clear. His shot being well forward, it was rolled over and over, shot through the head. Ben, the huge black retriever, was down on it in a moment, and soon had it at his master's side, where he dropped it and coolly stood watching in his wake the movement of the ferret, which raced out, looked round, and returned no doubt after fresh quarry. It was my turn next, and a very clean miss past the nose with the right as it jinked round a little whin-bush was followed by my sending the left right where, according to its course and speed, it should *have been*, but *where*

it was not; it having dropped clean out of view in a grass-fringed bolt hole.

A slight breeze was now, however, coming in from the sea, ruffling the brent grass and making it much more difficult to follow the rabbits in their pathways, which were ragged and uneven. Smart work it was, indeed, and at no time very certain; and so on that account the misses were excusable. Unlike his inland-bred brother, the rabbit of the seaside came out with an unmistakable "plunk," and at full speed dashed along the runs so well known to himself from his midnight gambols. Three and four shots at times would he take when not hit in the head or heart, and even then at times he would drag himself out of the dog's reach into a hole. Often we caught them with their heads just touching the edge of a hole, and would go up to find that the force with which they were running had carried them dead a full yard inside.

Shifting from burrow to burrow we soon raised a far heavier bag than we cared to carry home, but the timely arrival of the gamekeeper's little pony-cart relieved us of all our fears on that score. As the sun began to sink our ferrets began to show some signs of tiring, and we knew that if we hunted them longer they might lie up for a night and be lost. So lifting the last of them we made for home, quite well pleased with our day's rabbiting, and not at all certain that we would give up the gun for the rod so long as there were so many snow clouds in the atmosphere, and so much snaw-bree in the water. Possibly some may think that rabbit shooting will soon go down before the Hares and Rabbits Act. That is not, however, likely to be the case on the class of lands mentioned, which are specially suited for rabbit propagation, and where there are no crops to get damaged. In hedgerows, or in woodlands bordering on grain-growing lands at a high rental, the rabbit undoubtedly is a great nuisance, as he destroys far more than he is worth; but upon common lands, where natural grass is grown, he is worth, in the way of sport, all he eats, though I for one cannot say I care for him regarded from a nutrimental point of view. In many counties in the south good rabbit farms might well be laid off, where they could be preserved for shooting over ferrets, just as trout streams are preserved at so much a rod. To get an afternoon at rabbits should be almost as great a privilege, and one as well worth

paying for as a day at grouse, and there could be no better way of shooting them than in the way I have described. A man who can kill rabbits bolting hard in uneven places is a fair good match for anything running or flying, and if the cruel iron trap were less in use, we might have far more rabbit shooting than we at present have. The latter, as is well known, is forbidden to be set outside the hole—that is, it must be under the roof of the “scoop,” and not placed in the ridge of the long run of scraped-out sand which I have alluded to. Rabbit-catchers, however, prefer the “outside” run to the hole, as, owing to the noise made in setting inside, the alterations in the ground, and the smell of the hands, the little conies will not come out where the burrows are so full of holes that one would require all his traps to make death certain, at that particular hole, not even for days after the trap has been lifted. Partridges and pheasants scraping for food in the early mornings are frequent victims, however, to outside traps as well as foxes, and so it is quite right that the law should remain as it is. That it is a cruel weapon I have frequently argued, much more so when used after the month of February, as cases have been known of bleeding does with broken legs struggling in the traps being suckled by their young, and I personally have seen blood and milk spilt round the plate, the stump of a foreleg showing how the victim had escaped. Perhaps it would have been better to give the farmers a right to kill the rabbits unconditionally, save that the steel trap must not be used at all, only snares, ferrets, guns, and nets—guns only to be allowed in certain months and on certain days, in order that the keeper may know that the reports he hears from time to time are not from the guns of poachers.



A RAMBLE ROUND ROTHESAY.

LORD BUTE'S BEAVERS.



ROTHESAY, the capital of the island of Bute, was anciently a Royal Residence, and still gives the heir to the throne one of his titles, H.R.H. the Prince of Wales being Duke of Rothesay, or Rosa, as some of the old natives like to pronounce it. It is, owing to the mildness of the climate, generally designated the Montpellier of Scotland—some would go so far, indeed, in their comparisons as to style Montpellier the Rothesay of France—and has a mixed population of hotel-keepers, fishermen, boatmen, lodging-house keepers, and the like, the income of the inhabitants, as a rule, being derived from visitors, more especially those migratory individuals collectively known as “salt-water folk.” Unlike Campbeltown, it has no “staple industry,” and the people, having now less of their old Celtic instincts, do not seem to care to go in for the “barley bree” any further than imbibing it, their Highland extraction so far asserting itself, though the Rosa people are no more marked in regard to the length and strength of their postures than the natives of the mainland, or possibly, as they will say themselves, the people of the adjacent islands of Great Britain and Ireland.

It was not, however, to describe the place, the people, and its peculiarities that I “rambled” by the Kintyre boat—which “rambled” so much on the voyage that there was a marked loss of appetite at meal times, which many thought should have been marked in the steward’s bill as jettison—over to Greenock, and from Greenock down round Toward Point into Rothesay Bay. It was rather, indeed, with a view to running down to the foot of the island to see Lord Bute’s beavers, which makes me remark, by-the-bye, that between his lordship’s beavers and Lord Lorne’s buffaloes and bisons up at Inverary, Scotland is likely enough after all to become what the crofters’ friends have predicted, “a land of wild beasts and mighty hunters.”

Letting out a solitary passenger at Toward Point, and breathing a prayer inwardly that we might never be left in such a lone bleak spot in such wild weather, we—that is, my solitary self and a small Scotch terrier named Sprig, which I had picked up in Kintyre—sought the shelter of the funnel while the south-western showers came tearing up the Sound from Arran. Not since the day that I had seen the three famous 40-tonners, *Britannia* Norman, and *Bloodhound*, bound across the water with short-reefed mainsails to the Bute mark-boat, had I recollected experiencing such wild weather in the place, the sea being a mass of green and white foam flaked over by spindrift. Under the shoulder of the land we soon, however, made fair weather of it, and steamed slowly in up the Ascog side of the shore to the main pier, which, instead of being crammed by eager and excited tourists, as in July and August, when the *Columba* and other noted vessels are running, was haunted with the figure of some poor fellow, who seemed to flit about from shed to shed as if he did not mind at all about rushing out into the rain and spray in order to seize the ropes which were thrown to him from the bow, with a very indignantly uttered request from the captain on the bridge to “look smart.” Bow and stern having been made fast, we—that is “Sprig” and myself—got ashore and found our way to the Victoria Hotel, which is close to the pier and overlooks the esplanade, and soon were made very comfortable, while the landlord went out and struck a bargain with a local Jehu, who was not, however, the one we wanted, the latter being a poet of a more than local reputation, who has, indeed, published a volume which has been most favourably commented upon by the leading Scotch papers. That the muses should take to cab-driving after following the plough is nothing to be wondered at in—

Caledonia stern and wild,

Meet nurse for a poetic child.

The weather having moderated so far as the taking off of the rain, we were soon whirling down the south side of the shore for Kingarth, the driver, like all Scotch drivers, being exceedingly fond of pointing out the places of interest on the way-side, and communicating such information as he could pick up.

“Ye see *that* stane there,” he said, pulling up opposite the picturesquely situated church of Ascog, which stands on a little

rocky promontory in the bay ; “ that’s the grave of an actor—a play actor, one they called Stanley. He repented before he died, and gave up acting, and went about penting pictures, and they burried him there at his ain wish.” Laughing heartily at the idea of an actor “repenting” and leading a reformed life as an artist, I jumped out, and, with the terrier, cleared the wall in order to have a look at the last residence of Montagu Stanley, as great-souled an actor as ever trod the boards. Dramatic to the last, he chose a spot where he might rest peacefully away from all mankind, where the thrash of the sea was continually heard, and there was nought else to break the stillness but the screams of the gull. As I stood, the waves were dashing so furiously on the rocks below that the foam rose and lashed in columns of spray across the little railed-in grave, and on to the plain stone slab which bears his name. His is the only grave in the enclosure. How many scores of old tunes that simple name recalled ! Once it was read familiarly by many in the bills of the play, and whispered low as his voice was heard when he came on at the wings. Now all around—not a sea of eager faces, but of angry waves. It was, in the opinion of my driver and the natives generally, merely

THE ACTOR’S GRAVE.

Half on the land, and half on the sea,
 Its white walls washed by the salt sea spray,
 Without one yew or one cypress tree,
 The little churchyard looks over the bay.
 Where over the rocks so ragged and bare,
 Stream the yellow locks of the mermaid’s hair ;
 Where through the gloom the gull’s wings gleam,
 And the kittiwakes call and the solans scream,—
There, where the foam line marks the shore,
 And the spindrift flies from the wind-topped wave,
 Life’s curtain down, and life’s drama o’er,
 There has the actor found a grave.

There, where the tide doth ebb and flow,
 The sea-mew whispers her soft aside ;
 There, when the wavelets ripple slow,
 The murmuring shells their cues confide,
 And the soft winds sigh and the salt seas sob,
 And the billows break and the sea caves throb,

And the sky doth smile and the waves do laugh,
As they read the unwritten epitaph—

“Think not, reader, he lies alone,
King, and clown, and fool, and knave ;
Here many tombs are, if but one stone,
For, reader, it is an Actor's Grave.”

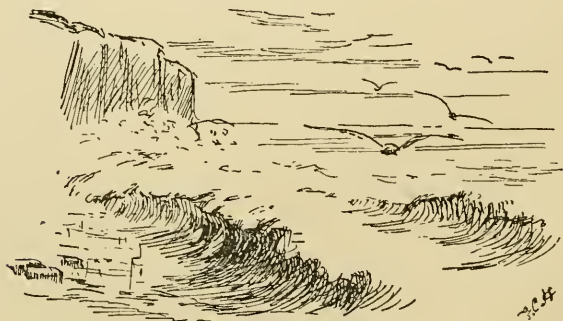
Driving smartly down the Kerrycroy-road, alongside which many yacht-racing men must have sailed, we turn upwards at the little fishing-village mentioned, and pass through the lovely woods of Mount Stewart, noticing the new mansion at present in an advanced state of construction or re-construction, for it will be remembered it was burnt down a few years ago. When completed it will be one of the finest private mansions in Scotland, as it certainly is one of the most picturesquely situated. A drive of three or four miles brings us to the quaint little country inn at Kingarth, where the hostess provides capital and ample refreshment for man and beast, and, guided by the driver, I make my way over to the spot, leaving the dog confined in the stable, for there was no knowing what mischief he would do, whether as regards rabbit, beaver, or anything else. As to the matter of courage, he would face a lion as readily as a rabbit, being bred off an old Argyllshire strain used for hunting mountain foxes. “I'm afraid you'll only see the places where they work, as they only come out in the night time,” kindly informs my Jehu, who could have told me *that*, no doubt, before we had set out, but did not want to ruin the chance of losing a fare in the dull season. I found he was quite correct, and that if I did wish to really see them I should have to postpone my visit, probably to the first favourable moonlight night, which was impossible.

Getting up into the wood of Scotch pine and larch, traversed by a small stream, I soon saw plenty of evidences of their industry. Some trees were down, with their heads all in the direction of or across the water. Many were half gnawed through, and no doubt would have to come down soon, while some had just been toppled by the gale which was blowing. The various dams have been constructed with great care and substantiality ; indeed, when one sees how they are arranged, so that the ever-flowing water passes over the top at an even rate or quantity per minute, he is astonished.

"They are hard workers," says the man in charge; "indeed they'll not stand a lazy one amongst them, and, as you can see yourself, Bute's no a place they could go on tramp. I've often seen them at work in the summer mornings at sunrise, felling timber and carrying mud up and down the streams on their tails; quite different from us, you ken, for we carry our mortar on our heads."

Altogether the "heads-I-win-tails-you-lose" style of work of the beavers in Lord Bute's colony interested me very much, and although I had not seen them on duty, I was quite well content with seeing the effects of their operations. That they would prove exceedingly objectionable on a well-wooded estate was, however, quite evident, and the lovers of forestry are never likely to make pets of them.

Getting back to the inn, I sampled the sap of the soil and some oatcakes and cheese, and an hour afterwards found myself back at my hotel. A hasty trip to Kean's cottage on Loch Fad, where the great King Edmund lived in the delightful company of the grouse and the black-cock for a full season, 'midst the beautiful birch trees, and I was off again to the adjacent island of Great Britain.



HERE'S A HEALTH, PARSON JACK, UNTO THEE.*



AVE you heard of Jack Russell who lives in the vale?
He is four score and more though he's hearty and hale,
As you'll find in a ride o'er a Devonshire dale,

When the hounds the wild stag are a running ;
Up hill or down hill on his stout little horse,
Past bog or through heather or copsewood or gorse,
There are few parsons better, you'll find many worse,
For none knows the country so cunning,
With one toot from the horn,
Sing hey ho Tantivy !
Here's a health, Parson Jack, unto thee.

The tallest boughs now, beneath which he rides,
He has often brushed back like twigs from his sides ,
And grey too have grown many bridegrooms and brides,
Which he's joined on a hunting morning.
And the children he blessed have budded and grown,
And bloomed, ay and blossomed, and withered, and flown,
And the cheery old parson is now all alone,
The fruits of a goodly life earning.
With one toot from the horn,
Sing hey ho Tantivy !
Here's a health, Parson Jack, unto thee.

Let those slowly ride who cannot go straight,
While we fly life's fences, let them find a gate ;
But don't through the world go craning and prate
From good sporting ways to be turning.
For the days will come of the red and the black,
When every good parson will hunt his own pack,
And every good curate will ride his own hack,
And the clerk stop the earths in the morning
With one toot from the horn,
Sing hey ho Tantivy !
Here's a health, Parson Jack, unto thee.

* The Rev. John Russell, of Devonshire.

A ROARING GAME.



UNDOUBTEDLY the most popular game north of the Tweed, at the present time, is "Curling," which, when the ice holds, is enjoyed by peer, peasant and pastor, with equal zest. It is one of the few games which, with golf, is considered to be quite orthodox in the eyes of the chief ecclesiastics, the moderators of the general assemblies of the church; and the minister is all the better liked if he can curl as well as preach.

When the temperature is far below zero, and the ice on the pond is holding hard, the question of Disestablishment is shelved, for the Free Kirk man forgets The Disruption, the U.P. man, or United Presbyterian, the Secession, there is a general dissolution of differences amongst the Dissenters and Burgher, and Anti-Burgher, Whig and Tory, "agree." The laird and the laird's man, the minister and the minister's man—the farmer and the factor, all mingle on one common level on the glassy surface of the icy board. The frozen-out mason who finds the sandstone too brittle for his chisel—and the village shoemaker, whose wax will not work under a certain degree of cold—find themselves together with the weaver and the baker arranged in one rink or side against the gamekeeper, the poacher, the gardener and the grocer, and with voices cheery and ringing in the clear frosty air all "goes merry as a marriage bell." "It is the game of all games," says the golfer, as he lays aside his clubs and looks out his silver-mounted Curling Stone handles; "We have always curling in Scotland," says the hunting man as he hangs up his crop, and seizes his sweeping-broom or besom, "and that is more than they have in the south when frozen out;" and "Bother the woodcock, the ice is bearing," is the remark of the keen shot to his keeper who informs him that the severe weather has brought to his coverts the first flights of the long bills. Eh man! but it is a grand game "Curling," young and old all assent, and who that has enjoyed it on a Scottish pond will say that it is not?

The origin of the game seems to be involved in obscurity, some Scotsmen claiming (just as they do for the kilt and the bag-pipes) that it belongs to the land of brown heath and shaggy wood. Others say that it was brought into the country by the Flemings who settled in Scotland about the end of the 15th century. The expressions used in the pastime to a large extent bear out this theory, for we have *curl* from the German *Kurzweil*, an amusement, a game, and *curling* from *Kurzweillen* to play for amusement. *Rink*, the part of the ice on which the game is conducted, also the name for either contesting party of four, means a race or course and seems to have been derived from the ancient Saxon word *brink* a strong man. Be this the case or not, we know that it was a favourite game in Scotland fully three centuries ago, for in Camden's *Britannia*, published in 1607, the author says of the little island of Copinsha, near the Orkneys, that upon it "are to be found in great plenty excellent stones for the game called 'Curling'." Some in their enthusiasm say that it was one of the favourite pastimes of Fingal and his heroes, and go so far as to quote Ossian in proof of this, but antiquity has always been a weak point of the Caledonian—and it will not do to go far beyond recorded history; suffice it to say that the pastime was never in greater favour than at present—when the Royal Caledonian Curling Club numbers close upon 20,000 members, amongst those in the list being keen players in every part of Canada, the United States, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, St. Johns, New Brunswick, as well as at Sydney in New South Wales, and at St. Petersburg and Moscow in Russia.

In regard to the game, the first thing necessary for it is a good strong sheet of ice, of from two to three inches thick, but of course the thicker the better. Only when frost is very keen is this obtainable in Great Britain, though of course in most of the other countries already named (excepting perhaps Sydney) ice can always be had in the winter season. The uncertainty of frost lasting in this country any great length of time, gives a greater zest to the enjoyment with which it is indulged in, and so it is in Scotland, where a real good game or *bonspiel* is always seen to greatest advantage. The first thing the Curlers have to do when the ice is found to be strong enough, is to form the rink. The "tees" or centre points are set down thirty-eight yards apart, and a circle of fourteen

feet diameter is drawn around each of them. Inner circles are drawn at two feet and four feet distance from the centre to facilitate measurements, and the whole may be compared to a modern Wimbledon target engraved upon the surface of the ice. There is no classification of hits however, and all shots count from the actual centre of the tee—*i.e.*—shots within the larger circle, generally alluded to as “the hoose” or house, for, everything outside is as dead to the score as a “miss” at rifle shooting. In exact alignment with both tees, a line, called the “central line,” is drawn extending to a distance of four yards behind each. At the end of these are placed the “hacks” or “crampits,” which are simply foot-rests for the players when swinging their Curling Stones, and the object in placing them four yards behind the tee, is, that the surface of the ice close to the centre of the counting circle may not be broken in their heavy rolling or “wobbling,” when delivered. “Hog” scores are then drawn at each end, about one sixth part of the entire length of play, that is, seven yards up the centre line from either tee, and a middle score midway between tee and tee. If the player, through lack of strength or from a desire to play slow and leave his stone as a guard to a winning shot cannot have the latter induced to cross the first mentioned line by means of the well plied brooms of his partners in the game, his stone is removed as a “hog.” In this sweeping up of stones lies much of the charm of the game, as often the pace is miscalculated, and the order to sweep is given either too late or too soon. Three or four rubs of a besom on the ice in front will bring the latter out sometimes like a horse under the whip. Frequently, too, the strength with which a stone has been played is so misjudged by the skip or captain who gives the orders, that, having been brought by hard polishing to the very tee, it will answer the call of the brooms of the opposing side, and inch by inch, slowly but surely, amidst roars of excitement and laughter, be taken outside of the counting ring altogether. No man in the game is ever idle, for as soon as one has played his last stone he must seize his broom and stand by to sweep up when called upon the stones of his neighbour. Even when it is freezing keen men will get so warm at the work as to cast off their coats, and will play all day in their shirt sleeves just as if it were on a summer’s afternoon.

The Curling Stones which are not allowed to be more than 50 lbs. in weight, inclusive of handle, or more than 36 inches in circumference, are about four inches in height, and, as a rule are made from blocks cut from the channels of running streams, the game being, on this account, known in some districts as "The Channel Stane." The most noted varieties in use are those of Burnock water, an Ayrshire stream, which are of a mixed or marbled grey in colour, strong and very keen, in fact a little too keen for very smooth ice. Sanquhar blacks, cut from the Lochburn in Dumfriesshire, coal black in colour, are durable, and said to be very keen in soft ice, and so advantageous to weak players in times of thaw, are great favourites in the South West of Scotland, as are also Crawfordjohns, from the parish of that name, in Lanarkshire. The latter are brittle and sometimes break when struck hard by a strongly played stone, but they are also good in soft ice, and when there is an inch of water in the pond seem to go through it like frozen-out ducks which have just regained their favourite swimming-place. Ailsa Craigs, cut from the rock of that name, are very keen, particularly those of a grey granite colour, and many of them are in use on the rinks of the Canadian and Nova Scotian clubs. In the north, "Crieff" Curling Stones, of which there are various varieties, are much in use. The handles are fixed to stones, which have but one single polished sole, by means of a screw to an iron projection fixed to the top. To stones which have double soles and are reversible, one being a little keener than the other, they are fastened by a bolt which goes through the centre of the stone, and a nut which is countersunk into a cavity beneath. The brushes used by the players may be of the kitchen or carpet pattern, the latter for preference, but country players still work with the old-fashioned bunch of broom cut from the wayside, or woodlands, and rudely tied with string. With these tied like switches they will sweep the ice in a most astonishing fashion, and possibly get a foot or two more out of a lagging stone than could be obtained with more fashionable implements. Moreover, a loose hempen straw from the carpet broom, or a few hairs from the housemaid's brush, will sometimes stop a stone in its passage, whereas a newly culled broom besom will rarely ever do this.

The great point in the game is to have the winning shot or shots, when the sixteenth or last stone of both sides of four men

each has been played. In order to do this, one must be able to *draw* gently into the ring, into any particular place pointed out by the skip. This requires great judgment, as if the stone is delivered with too much strength it will pass over the tee and through the counting circle, and be lost altogether; if too slow, it will not cross the hog score, and be equally useless. Good players err always on the slow side, relying on the sweeping of their partners in the game to take them on a good few feet when the stone begins to slacken in its pace. *Striking* consists in a player knocking a winning shot out of the circle whether his own remains or not, and a higher kind of feat of the same kind is to "chop and lie," that is, to knock a stone out of the circle, the striking stone to remain inside. As a good shot should be immediately protected a player must be able to *guard* when called upon, that is, to play his stone across the hog score so that it shall remain on the ice covering the winner partly or completely from the next player. If played too near the winning shot it is a *bad* guard, if touching it, it is obviously no guard at all. Occasionally the player is required to *raise* a stone, that is, lift it a few feet nearer the tee, and this also requires much judgment and caution. When a fair, clear, and direct road to the winning shot, or to the tee, cannot be got through, the guarding stones, *inwicking* or cannoning, from an outside stone on to the winning one is tried, as at billiards, and occasionally *outwicking*, which is very much the same as the billiard losing hazard, a stone of the player's own side being touched on the outside so as to force it centre-wards to the tee. By far the most scientific stroke in the game is that of *wicking* and *curling in*, which is like screwing in off the red as at billiards, an inside twist or *curl* being put upon the stone by means of the handle, on delivering, which begins to act at the moment of contact with the inside of the stone aimed at, and causes the played stone to work on its iron axis to the centre. More exciting, perhaps, is chipping a winner, *i.e.*, forcing out the winning shot through a channel or port of guards when only an inch or two of the stone aimed at is visible to the player. This is a feat which is generally tried with the last stone, and, if successful, it is needless to state is received with shouts of congratulation. But to a game—"a good old-fashioned Scottish game of Curling."

It is the morning after the fifth night's frost, a hard, black, penetrating frost, and the Miller of Craigengillan, a keen curler himself, has declared that the mill-dam is "bearing as hard as a horn," and that the ice is in rare condition for Curling, and strong enough to carry a horse and cart. So word has been sent to the Secretary of the Curling Club of the neighbouring parish of Strathtaigle, that the Craigengillan curlers are prepared to meet his men on the Gillan mill-dam at ten o'clock, in the annual match for a beef and greens dinner, and for a liberal allowance of oatmeal and coals for the poor people of the winning side. The lovers of "the Roaring Game," as it is sometimes termed, are by no means unmindful of these whom the winter pinches most severely, whilst giving them the means of their greatest enjoyment. Wakeful all night, so hopeful are they of coming pleasures, the players require little warning, and sharp at the hour appointed they gather down to the icy board on which the miller, assisted by his men, has drawn the required diagrams for four rinks, and swept off the hoar frost and snow-drift from the surface. It is a lovely winter scene, such as few artists dare to depict. Eastward the tall pine trees are draped in light garments of white which are suffused in places with glowing red sunshine, and the rabbit runs amongst the fern-work are flanked with icy portals of sun thaw. Even the old overshot-mill seems decorated for the occasion, for spikelets glitter from its every float and a solid mass of crystal, formed by slow and gradual freezing, marks the place where the water was fed from the sluice. The curlers have no time to admire the scenery, however, and in a little time with well plied besoms have the rink as smooth and clear as a large plate-glass window. Soon the hacks and "crampits" or footboards from which the stones are delivered are placed upon the ice, the skips or captains, who are two rival lairds, take up their positions by the tee to give their directions, and the game proceeds. The miller is "head" of the home team, and is asked to draw a stone to the edge of Laird Lamont's broom, which is placed on the inner edge of the fourteen feet circle. Why not ask him to play to the tee, some will ask? Well, the reason is plain, for every stone has a chance of being struck backward during the game, and a stone on the tee would be certain to be soon "lifted," whilst the stone which struck it out would most likely be winner.

The miller miscalculates his strength, or the keenness of the ice, and his stone goes right "through the house" altogether, amidst remarks of remonstrance from his skip, that he has been putting "far too much butter in his parritch lately, and must stick to skimmed milk." Weaver Watson, his opponent, taking warning is more wary, and delivers his stone with nearly a half less force—indeed one would think far too little—but the skip having called on his men to sweep or "soop," they ply their brooms like demons, and inch by inch work it up till it rests just inside the circle. The miller is asked to play to the face of it (a steady lead would be asked to draw past it), and this he does with such force that both stones leave the ring. Weaver Watson then draws a nice shot which is just *too good* for it rests on the very tee or potlid. The weaver and the miller now take up their brooms, and the sweeping stations vacated by Soutar Tamson of Craigengillan, and big Robinson the Strath-taigle village blacksmith. Soutar Tamson needs no directions. He knows well what to do and he does it, for he forces the stone from the tee-head and lies himself, that is, he executes the chipping and lying process alluded to. "Well done, tailor!" is the call to this, followed by the remark: "It will no be a Straith-taigle blacksmith that will say you are only the ninth part of a man."

"Never mind him, Blacksmith," is the cry of Laird Logan, "gie him a wee bit jag wi' his ain needle."

This the Parish Vulcan means to do by removing the stone and leaving his own in the place of it, but he fails, and his stone indeed acts as guard to the winner—a very unfortunate state of matters. The tailor having his winning shot completely guarded by his opponent's draws a second to within a few feet of the tee, amidst warm congratulations and a shake of the hand from his skip. The blacksmith comes down with a rattle on his stone, and so clears the ice for his successor, the parish minister, who is, curiously enough, opposed by the Free Kirk bellman of Strath-taigle. The latter has to play first, and elects to guard the winning stone, which he does with a most judiciously played shot, his stone being by means of his partner's brooms just taken over the hog score. The minister is directed to leave it alone, and to try an inwick from his opponent's second shot on the face of the winner. In delivering he imparts an



"He swings his heavy
granite stone of Aulea Craig"

inner twist or side to his stone, which catches the one aimed at on the inner edge, and twists in on to the face of the winner, which it removes. It is a wonderfully clever feat, and shouts of triumph and a tossing of brooms and caps into the air proclaim the appreciation with which it is regarded.

"Eh, man, but it's grand," the laird says, "and worth a hundred sermons any day, man."

"The bellman is asked by his skip to remove the guard which still lies on the hog score, and this very simple curling feat he succeeds in doing. The minister replaces it as well as he can, but leaves half of its cheek bare when looked at from the tee. The two skips now leave their position by the tee to finish up the head, and Laird Lamont determines to keep what advantage his side has got by protecting the winning shot, so attempts to guard as well as he can the winning shot on the tee. He is far too slow, however, and all the efforts of his partners with their brooms fail to get his stone across the hog score, and it has to be shoved off the ice. Laird Logan, who knows that his side have two shots in the ring, if the winning one is removed, resolves to chip it. Taking cool, careful aim he swings his heavy granite stone of Ailsa Craig with all his force down the rink. "Is he past the guard?" is the anxious question. "He is on it!" "He is not!" are the calls as it roars along the ice "Past it!" Yes he is! but so close that one could scarce put a sheet of paper between the two stones. Soon the winner is sent spinning away and the Strathtaigle rink lie two shots. Laird Lamont, with his last stone, tries a cool careful draw up the central ice to the winner, but is a foot or so from scoring, though never were brooms plied harder than those wielded by his men. Laird Logan cautiously tries to draw a third on the other side of the tee, but fails, and so Strathtaigle win the opening head with two shots. Little time is lost, and with cries of "Soop him up," "You for a Curler," "Up hands, men," "Not a broom, he is strong enough," "You for a Curler, Laird," laughter, cheers, waving of brooms, and "wee drappies of the best of whisky from the Laird's bottles," the game proceeds till the red glare in the West proclaims that the winter day is near a close. A dinner of beef and greens, *i.e.*, off a large round of boiled beef, served up with green kail and washed down "with tumblers of toddy," follows at the village Inn and at the "wee

short 'our ayont the twal," they depart to meet again in friendly rivalry with some other local club next morning.

Then comes the great bonspiel on the Royal Caledonian pond at Carsebreck, when the Curlers north of the Firth do battle against those of the south. There when the echoes of the starting gun rings in the Highland glens, the men of the Lowlands, with besom and stone, fight the stalwart Highland men just as they did with dirk and claymore in the olden times, and the ringing shouts from a thousand throats would make the traveller, who hurries along the railway by the edge of the meadow, think that he had come upon the scene of an old clan fray. Indeed, the gathering of the Royal Caledonian Curling Club, when ice is strong on Carsebreck, is undoubtedly the most stirring sporting sight to be seen in Great Britain, if not indeed of the whole world.



A RACE FOR THEMSELVES.

“ RECK card, sir! 'Ere you are, sir. Card of this day's races, sir. Winners marked, sir, if you like.”

“Then mark the winners, please,” said the gentleman whom the lad addressed as he stepped on to the platform, at Carlisle Station. “And see that you mark them right, for I've not been able to back a winner for many a day.”

The lad seized the pencil which was proffered him, and speedily ran his eye down the card, marking, as he did so, the horses which he believed would prove victorious over the day's racing.

“Well, is Gingerbeer doing them right for you, then? Spotting the winners, eh, Ginger?” said a gentleman who approached them from the other side of the station.

“Hilloah, Tom,” said the card buyer, laughing. “I've a horse in every race, and so I'm just having a little information. Gad, it's queer, but these fellows seem to know more about the horses than the men who own them.”

“It's a fact, Quarrier, that's the very reason I dropped it. I never did any good at the hay and corn business. One good tout lets you know about every horse, and your trainer can only tell you about those you *have*, which, as a rule, he does after he has served himself, and that too with a grudge. Talk of first calls on a jockey. Bah, the first claim of the trainer on the market is a deuced sight more costly.”

“And that's a moral, sir,” said the half-tout, half-cardseller, jockey's shoe-black and general blackguard of the day, without taking any notice of the remarks which were being made. “And Mister Brownside, you just have a bet on that,” he said, turning to the gentleman whom Mr. Quarrier had addressed as Tom. “I owes you a good turn ever since that time I was stone-broke, and you paid my fare back to Newcastle.”

“And what's your strong tip, Ginger?” said the other, seizing hold of the card.

The lad ran his finger down the card till he came to “a Selling Stake,” and pointed to the entry, “Mr. W. Freestone's 'Back-

biter,' £50." "You back that, Mr. Brownside, and I tell you, you won't do wrong; back it—yes—for all you have."

"If you do, Tom," said Mr. Quarrier, laughing, while the lad ran away to catch a fresh customer, "you'll be a far bigger fool than I take you for."

"Has he not a chance, then?"

"Chance!" said the other contemptuously. "If it was a donkey-race, Tom, and last to win, I'd back him for a thousand and I don't mind laying you a new hat to a shilling hat guard and all—that he's not in the first four."

"Done with you, and let me tell you my opinion; I'll back him for a good bit of money."

"Against my own advice."

"What the deuce do I care about your advice? You're only the owner, and as likely as not the most ignorant man in the business."

"Does *he* know I'm the owner?" said the other aside.

"Who? Ginger? No, or he wouldn't maybe have tipped ye. He knows well enough you are Mr. Quarrier, but he hasn't the slightest idea that you are the Mr. Freestone, the owner of horses, and the owner of 'Backbiter.' Here, hey, Ginger!" he shouted, "is that really right? 'Backbiter' for the last race?"

"S'help me, sir," said the card-seller, who was rushing past in a hurry, "he'll win unless he breaks his legs, yes, sir, he'll crawl in on a couple of legs, if it comes to that. A certain winner. Back him, sir! Back him!" and Ginger disappeared in the direction of a newly-arrived train which was bringing in a crowd of "Geordies," from canny Newcastle.

This last bit of advice was greeted with a genuine roar of laughter from Mr. Quarrier, who could not help thinking that the whole thing was a capital joke. "I tell you what, Tom Brownside, 'Backbiter' couldn't win a race, supposing he had a start of a distance, with a clever shadow on his back."

"'Backbiter' will carry my money," was the reply. "You're *only his owner*, and know nothing, I tell you."

"Well, here's his *trainer* then. We'll ask him Has 'Backbiter' a chance, Bittocks?"

"Not the slightest, sir. Fact is, I've arranged to let Flapps off by the half-past four train, to ride at Carington, and Harry Hudson's boy will ride him for me, but there's not the slightest

chance of his winning the 'Selling Stakes.' What made you think he had, sir?"

"Well, that card-selling fellow, Gingerbeer, says he has; for he's just marked my card for me."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the trainer. "Ha! ha! ha! it's a great joke, this card-marking. Joe Sydney, of Newmarket, and me had a rare go with one. We had two hosses in a match, and we'd pretty well arranged it, when hang me if we didn't get a fellow who didn't know us, to mark our cards for us. The fellow went for Joe's, which was the wrong 'un, and we asked his reasons. 'Well,' says he, 'I'm nowt, but fellows as knows tells me that this 'ere Joe Sydney would sell his grandfather, and that Bittocks had squared him.' You should have heerd Joe swear, you don't mind much, sir, what these fellows say, more especially that Gingerbeer. If that 'ere Gingerbeer had a-been on the turf, like you or me, sir, instead of hanging over it brushing boots and wiping muddy racing jackets, he would ha' been warned off, sir, long ago. Yes, sir; and they might ha' warned him off, and kicked him off, and drummed him off, soger-ways; but he would always ha' found his way back."

"Just so, Bittocks," said Mr. Brownside. "But I'll back your bad one, 'Backbiter,' all the same."

"Do as you please, sir, and, seeing you are in the throwing-away game, you might let me have a little to pay my corn and hay bills. Backing 'Backbiter' is like flinging your money down a old coal pit, sir, believe me; but just have your own way. Good-day, sir, I'll see you on the course."

"Willie Quarrier," as he was familiarly termed by those who knew him well, made his way out to the course accompanied by his old friend Tom Brownside. They refused all the cheap offers of the local Jehus to drive them, preferring to walk and enjoy the humours of the crowd and the fun of the fair. They had a quiet peep into the interior of many of the old coaching hotels, where the talk was all about the forenoon's wrestling matches, and the coming races. The Newcastle birr was heard on every side, for the men of Geordie Stephenson's town make a point of seeing Carlisle races every year, and bring too their wives and sweethearts with them. The natives of the merry town itself, so renowned in Border song and story, and so fond of the drop of good Scotch whisky, though represented

by Sir "Watery" Wilfrid, are all keen sportsmen, and will talk for years about final courses at Langtown, of struggles for the "Cumberland Plate," and of stout matches on the morn when all was "hying and skying" and "cross buttocking," and "Cumberland Grips." Who does not recollect old days at Carlisle, and old chats with the men of a bygone age—the old mail-coach drivers and guards, of Powley and Eade and Jim Byrnes, and many others who were full of anecdotes of the old times of Caller Ou and Warlock, and of Royalist and Sim Templeman, the "Archer" of his day? In due time they reached the course and got into the paddock, where, already, the betting clamour had commenced, for the weights had just been hoisted for the "Trial Stakes."

"I've one in this race, Tom," said Mr. Quarrier, "that will just about win, and my advice to you is to back it. Flapps, I see, has just weighed out for it. You back mine, the filly, by 'Jolly Beggar' out of 'Frail Sister,' and leave 'Backbiter' alone."

"I'll do nothing of the kind," said the other, "I've made up my mind to back Gingerbeer's tips, and he hasn't gone for yours in this race, I can see from your card."

"Bah! you heard what Bittocks said."

"Oh," was the reply, "he's only the trainer; what can he know?"

"Well," said the other, "I do like your impudence, I tell you the horse is an incapable brute; and you tell me *I'm but the owner*; and the trainer, he comes and backs me up, and you say he knows nothing, he's only the trainer. Who the devil knows if we know nothing?"

"Those in the swindle, whatever swindle is on—but I can easily see you're out of it."

"How can I be out of it if my horse is to win?"

"Lord knows, wait and see; but one thing I know about these poor hangers-on, is, that they're not ungrateful. Gingerbeer owes me three pounds which I gave him in the streets of Edinburgh, when he was starving, and he told me, with tears in his eyes, that the first good thing he got he would let me have it. I haven't seen him till to-day again, and your horse is the one he has given me. He's given it to you too, yourself, because he doesn't know who you are, I expect, but that's no matter, *back it.*"

Their conversation was suddenly interrupted by the saddling bell, and the cry "They're off," so they rushed up the Stand to see the 'Frail Sister' filly go out of sight behind the drinking booths at the far side of the course in a truly winning style. Great was Mr. Quarrier's disappointment, however, to see the jockey hard at work on her when they came into view again.

"You're not in it, Quarrier," was the call of his companion at his side. "She can't stay, Gingerbeer was right and his tip has won. You and your trainer are a couple of knowing worthies, aren't you? Oh dear, it's a nice thing to own race-horses, and a common shoe-black can let you know more for a sixpence than you know yourself."

"It would really seem so, Tom. I'm hanged if the turf isn't getting altogether into a condition to frighten men away from it through the babbling of stable secrets."

"It can only get a little worse through one thing, Quarrier, my man."

"What's that, Tom?"

"The employment of female jockeys, and then they'd tell so many lies that no one would believe them. If we had only a race of deaf and dumb lads for stable boys we might get in, but 'Blab' rules the stable nowadays. Still, you follow Gingerbeer's tips, blackleg though he be."

With small fields, punctuality at the scales, and ready starts, the programme was soon got down and the "Selling Race" was arrived at. Flapps, along with others of the most noted riders present, had left with the view of getting on to Carington to fulfil engagements next day, and Harry Hudson's youngest apprentice soon weighed out in the well-known yellow and red belt of Mr. Freestone. Contrary to expectations, everyone of the horses went to the post, and to Mr. Quarrier's astonishment, and the apparent astonishment of Bittocks, 'Backbiter' was backed to win a good round sum at a nice price, a well-known sharp's bookmaker having the working of a commission for somebody. No one could understand it, but Gingerbeer, who, as soon as the horses were at the post, went rushing about telling everybody to be on to "Backbiter."

"Have you backed it?" shouted Brownside to his friend as he joined him in the Stand.

"Certainly not; I wouldn't back him, though you went down

on your knees and prayed for me to do it. I'll tell you what I'll do too, I'll back my old pony Peter, that I drive at home, to give him a stone at a mile and beat him in a canter."

"They're a wretched bad lot altogether, you must bear in mind, Mister," said a man who had the reputation of knowing something,

"And as bad a set of blackguard boys on the backs of 'em," shouted another, "as ever sat on horses; I just had a look at 'em going out, and I said that I had not seen such a crooked lot of men and horses for many a day. Still Jack Gingerbeer has told me this 'Backbiter's' a certainty, and he's rarely out."

"Jack Gingerbeer again," said Mr. Quarrier to himself rather savagely. "Why, I'd better give him the management of my horses altogether."

Soon came the call "They're off," and in less than a minute they came rattling down past the Stand, "Bird's Eye," which was favourite in the betting at even money, leading and "Backbiter" last of all.

"There, Tom, there," shouted his owner excitedly, "there, I told you so—where's your Gingerbeer man now?"

The latter bit his lip and held his tongue, for he was not prepared to see the horse in such a position. On disappearing behind the hill, "Backbiter" was a good four lengths in rear of everything, and his chance seemed utterly hopeless. For a quarter of a mile nothing can very well be seen on the Carlisle course from the smaller Stand, and so all kept waiting with strained eyes to see what would come first into view.

"There they come," was the call, "and what's in front?" was the eager query from those who couldn't see.

"Why something in yellow, and a red belt."

"Yellow and red belt, 'Backbiter,'" shouted Brownside. " 'Backbiter!' 'Backbiter' wins—'Backbiter' walks in."

"She does, by all that's holy," cried Mr. Quarrier, as he saw his horse pass the first. "I must try and get to the bottom of this. It's the queerest thing I've ever experienced in racing."

"Eh? What about Gingerbeer now?" shouted his friend, "I've sixty to ten about him—my old hay and corn man. Nice owner of horses you are to give a fellow tips."

"Tom, you must help me to get to the bottom of this. I must know out of sheer curiosity, even though it should cost me a ten pound note. That Gingerbeer does not know who



Backbiter walks in!

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Wm. H. Mumford

I am, so get a hold of him and over a bottle for a fiver he'll tell us all about it."

Half an hour afterwards, Mr. Quarrier and Mr. Brownside were seated in a room in that well-known old hostelry, the "Grey Goat," in Carlisle, with a bottle of Moët and Chandon, and champagne glasses on the table.

"So you would like to know how I knew about this 'Back-biter.' Well, you promises not to tell, so I'll let you hear. Mr Bittocks who trains for this Mr. Freestone——"

"Hang the scoundrel," said Mr. Quarrier to himself, "has he sold me, I wonder?"

"He comes," said the other, laying down his champagne which he had been swilling, "down here, and he says, 'Flapps is going off to Carington to ride there with the half-past four train, and the "Selling Race" is at five o'clock. You see Jack Wilson (that's Harry Hudson's lad), Ginger, and tell him I want him to ride "Backbiter," so he's not to go away in the morning if he's nothing else keeping him.' Well, I tells Wilson, and Gardner and some of his pals about this, and we found out all that were likely to go and who was to ride.

"Well, none of us have had a rosy time of it," so says Jem Blount with a wink, says he, 'Boys, we hain't had a go for ourselves for a long time, now we've done so much pulling and roping and riding weight off, and all that for them, and then, unless the thing is all right, they sends for Mister Harcher and Mister Georgie Fordham to do the winning game. Suppose we've a race to ourselves and this "Selling Stakes" is the game? What's about the worst one of the lot?' says he. 'Backbiter,' says everybody. 'He's about as slow as they can breed 'em nowadays,' said Jack Wilson. 'Then,' says Joe, 'they can't see what we're doing here from the Stand, I vote we plank our money down on "Backbiter," every copper, and rope all the rest,' says he. 'Done,' says everyone. So we got Flash Jim to do the commission, and there, well—you backed him, sir, I hope you did, and you saw the race. Good-night, gentlemen, I'm off, I've to catch the train for London. I know a thing of the same kind coming off at Alexandra Park."

"Tom," said Mr. Freestone Quarrier, "you may spend thousands keeping race horses, I see, but the sharps will have occasionally one race for themselves."

PTARMIGAN SHOOTING ON BENLOMOND.



HERE are few who have ever sailed up the Queen of Scottish lakes, Lochlomond, but must have envied the happy possessor of that little lodge built on the side of Benlomond about a mile to the northward of Rowardennan. Possibly many would prefer the charming chalet-like residence of Mr. Mair, situated on the green slopes of the loch at the foot of the burn, with its green lawns, its rose-clad walls, and the purring sound of the waterfall away up the hill-sides to hush one gently to sleep amongst the green brackens on a summer's afternoon; but a sportsman would naturally prefer the Ptarmigan for its lovely loneliness, away from every sign of civilisation save the tourist-laden steamer, which, like something out of dreamland, hurries with fitful paddle-throbs through the mountain mist, and disappears again round a pine-clad island, while the music of some itinerant band echoes through the hills, and the sunlight causes the dancing wake to sparkle in a hundred colours. Here you can see the trout jump in the lake below, while as you dress you can watch the black-cock sitting proudly on the alder-tree above, and hearken to the crow of the grouse cock on the mountain-side. Here, while the ladybird is bathing herself in the hollow of a dew-filled rose, you may, towel in hand, trot through the hazels, and plunge from some grassy knoll into the limpid water, a fit mirror for any maiden, and take a few strokes while you breathe the clear, cool air, which never knew smoke nor coal-distilled fog. Fit residence for poet, philosopher, author, or artist, the Ptarmigan is one of the very ideal residences of a sportsman—a born sportsman, who loves sport for its own sake, not a modern manufactured one, who submits to it for the sake of appearances. The man, indeed, who shoots grouse on the Ptarmigan hill, will not need to be a patent-leatherbooted muff, for there is no harder walking to be done in making a bag in the whole of Scotland.

Such was our experience some years ago when enjoying the hospitality of a friend who held a sub-lease of the place for the season. The heather had yielded fair sport in the shape of grouse, and the loch had been kind and generous withal as regards trout, while an occasional visit to Loch Long by way of Tarbert gave us a sniff of the salt water, and a basket of cod and lythe, for the long sea lake winds up in eel-like fashion far inland from the Frith of Clyde, and lies just three miles over from its fair freshwater sister at the place mentioned.

It was at the end of the season, when the brackens were bending frail and brown, and the leaves were beginning to leave the trees before every fresh blast of wind which swept across the loch from the westward. The boats had diminished the number of their voyages, the Cook's tourists had gone off to warmer climes, and the porters at the piers were troubled more with the putting on board of sheepskins and the like than with hampers of game and portmanteaus. A cold, wintry feeling in the mornings made one look almost instinctively to the hilltops, and there would one see the patches of snow which showed that during the night wild weather had been on its wintry war-path. December was close at hand, and possibly the grouse and the blackcock knew that on the 10th of that month they would be again safe under cover of the law, and free till the next 12th of August to fly the heather unmolested. Sportsmen all wanted variety, and our small party wanted ptarmigan, of which it was known there were a few on what is known as the ptarmigan spur of Benlomond, from which the lodge derives its name. Perhaps some of the fair ones had to do with it, for ptarmigan's claw brooches and shawl-pins were fashionable. And everyone knows that if a gull wing, a teal breast, or throat-flecked cravat of the stately heron is wanted for a lady, you are no sportsman in her eyes if you cannot secure it, no matter how clever you may be with the gun. But a truce to explanations.

The Highland keeper, our guide, is waiting to pilot us up the rugged sides of the mountain. Hill-climbing has come easy to him from long practice, and he walks on level ground as if his feet were not made for it. He knows every part of the hill and every part of the loch below. He can dress his own flies, make up his own tackle, pull a boat for an angler to per-

fection, and handle a gaff or a landing-net with certainty. On land he knows how to keep his boats free from dry rot, his guns clear from rust, and his dogs in a cool-nosed, clean-skinned, healthy condition; he can lay off a lawn-tennis ground, tinker up a burst water-pipe, and pack game with any man; while if you want some music he is always good for a pibroch to rouse you at breakfast-time in the mornings or make you to get to bed in the evening. These are the qualifications which we would like for every Highland keeper, but the man who possesses them is not always attainable. With moderately light shooting-boots (the cobbler who makes the shop-window shooting-boots ought to be condemned to wear them) we follow as best we can, thankful at times for a wee bit rest at the foot of some more than usually steep face to recover our winds. Avoiding treacherous patches of flow moss, and jumping from peat hag to peat hag, we make our way, thinking every minute that we shall reach the summit, but as yet it is still away up amongst the mist. Occasionally a white hare scrambles, rabbit-like, through the short scrub heather; but we heed it not. We are for white feather alone; not that we mean to show any, but white fur has for the time being lost its attractions. On the edge of a precipice we halt for a minute or two while the keeper examines some holes in the face carefully.

"Yes," he says, "there is no doubt the tod's here yet"—the tod being the Scotch name for the fox, or, possibly, rather the mountain fox, which lives on the Highland hillsides. "Well," he says, renewing his journey, "there will be work here for us all if we be spared to the spring time."

"Climb, climb, climb!" is still the call, and one could almost imagine himself in one of the ladder-shafted lead mines of Wales. The islets on the loch are getting smaller, and we can see little narrow belts of water by Inchtavannach and Rosdhu, which were not distinctly seen before. The atmosphere is getting colder, the rocks are getting barer, and vegetation is beginning to get more and more scant. We are getting near to the region of the ptarmigans and mountain doves at last, for here, when in their darker plumage in the summer mornings of their courtship, has our keeper, when out watching for the mountain fox, listened to their soft "cooing" and the amorous "ruff e roo" of the male bird. Up there, away from all sounds of civilisation,

with nought but the song of the mountain ouzel to cheer them, lives in solitude the little grouse of the hill, which in its nature and habits more resembles the pigeon than its feathered brother of the moorland. What plants grow on the bare rocks afford it food, and it cares not to come down the hill like the red grouse or the blackcock, and search for a living when its stock of berries is scant. In summer it lives joyously in the sunshine light of early and late sun-rise ; in winter, amongst the snow, it passes its time cheerfully under the blankets of mist, or sits sheltered in a crevice when the fierce gales sweep across the summit in all their fury, like a storm-driven seagull on some green field by the surf-beaten shore. Changing its plumage, as the hills change their covering, from a darker or browner shade to a deep white by November, it is not easy to detect it sitting when occasional patches of snow cover the ground, but unfortunately for itself it does not dread guns, and when flushed flies a short distance off and sits down again.

But our guide is creeping twenty yards above us on hands and knees, for he knows their nesting ground, and expects to find them very soon. We follow as best we can, taking care that the muzzles of our guns shall always look right and left of us in case of accident, for there is no saying how or when accidents will happen. The keeper, however, is on his way downwards, and we halt. "They are up the hill to the right," he says, and by making a slight detour we shall just get right under them. Climbing down hill, as an Irishman would say, is exceedingly pleasant work after a long climb up, and so we enjoy the change. Bending to the right, we half stumble, half crawl, up a steep, rocky face, and as the keeper retires, after peering over the edge and pointing where they are, with our shooting caps shoved back into our pockets, we creep up with guns in front. Yes, there they are, there can be no doubt, and all within thirty yards. Raising ourselves on our left knee in military fashion, we are just in time to knock down a bird as it rises in a sort of "fluffing" fashion like a disturbed bird on a house-top, and knock it over in time to wheel and secure a second with our left. My friend has been less lucky, for he missed with his first, though he secured a bird with his second. Wrapping up the lovely-plumaged little things, whose white feathers were stained with little scarlet drops, we struck across a flat piece of the hill, in

order to catch them at another point. Coming on them too suddenly, however, they rose and flew out of view without giving us a chance. Still our guide did not despair, for he knew that they would not go very far away, preferring to circle round their nesting-ground to the long, straight, down-hill and away flight of the red grouse. After some cold scrambling work amongst boulders, through soft mosses and across gullies, we walked up to the edge of a bold face, and looking over managed to secure a brace as they fluttered carelessly into the mist, which was slowly trailing across the mountain side. With this small bag we were content, for a wild afternoon was promised, and we thought it high time to make for the cosy lodge below. After all the ptarmigan does not afford much sport even where plentiful, as the bird wants the "go" of game of the southern slopes, and the sensation of killing him is scarcely worth the climb. Norway, however, is more properly his country, as in Scotland he is only to be found on the peaks of the highest mountains, and possibly now on Benlomond there are few coveys to be found, though on the hills of the Argyllshire side of the loch they are said to be more common.



IN HIGHLAND QUARTERS.

BY the end of August most sportsmen have taken their moors and made preparations for the autumn campaign, the gaities of Goodwood holding them for a week longer, while some who like a little sailing may hang over another to enjoy the yachting attractions of the Solent. It is not, however, such a far cry to Loch Awe now as it used to be; and one can quite well have all the comforts of Piccadilly, as Bailie Nicol Jarvie would have said, had he been domiciled in that happy region, instead of his own loved Sautmarket, and hear the cock crow in the pass of Aberfoyle next morning, thanks to the invention of the once despised steampot. "The old styles and the new" of travelling have been made the subject of more than one picture; and somehow the sportsman, when he turns from the neat team with its roast-beef-complexioned old driver, waiting for the reins from the smart strapper of the halfway house, wishes that Geordie Stephenson's "Coo," which is so often mentioned in railway anecdotes, had been a little more awkward for the train than as events proved it to be awkward for the "Coo." There is not much pleasure to be got out of a railway journey now more than a semi-sound sleep, if that expression be admissible, a sawdust sandwich, the wing of a wire-pinioned chicken to carve which requires the half of the allotted five minutes allowed for refreshments, or a plate of thrice-boiled soup, something like the "cauld kail het again" which the average Scotch sermon is said to resemble. It is, however, satisfactory to know at times that your journey will be a short one, and that, sharp to a minute, you will be landed, if your lodge is not a remote one, and you have been travelling fast, in time for breakfast and a few brace on the opening forenoon. In the olden days the northern starts from Hatchett's and other coach resorts were always very interesting, and it is needless to state that all along the road there were numerous little incidents and adventures which afforded changes of conversation at the close of the day's sport quite away from the pursuits of the field, the stories about which sometimes get painfully slow and wearisome, more especially

when one feels leg-weary with walking, and has eyes "double reefed" with the effects of the strong mountain—air, ahem! I had almost written dew. Since those days the landscape has been greatly changed by modern systems of agriculture, and the landmarks of a bygone age have disappeared even to the very "pike," the last to be rubbed out. The halfway houses are no longer the snug, cheery places they were; the landlord is no longer the burly Boniface who hearkened at the door for the coach horn; the barmaid no longer the cheery-faced girl the coachman chucked under the chin; all these have gone, and even the stables by the lonely roadsides, which held anxious tits which neighed in their stalls as they heard the winding notes come on in advance of the autumn breeze, are roofless and deserted, or have been turned into outhouses for cows. A well-planned drive north now to one's moor would form a most pleasant excursion, more especially if in the company of some veteran who recollected the good old times before railways became general, and could point out the old places where coaches came to grief, the inns at which halts were made, and the many changes which have taken place during the past forty years. We see little of the scenery now from the railway carriage windows, for no man can properly appreciate scenery hurriedly, and without its own music—the notes of wild birds, the hum of the bee or even the chirping of the hedge-mouse. In the days of old there was time for one to feast his eyes at leisure on the lovely views that every turn revealed, while the guard raised echoes in the wooded glens from bank to bank; and, if there was a little discomfort at times from boisterous weather, it was always cheerily borne. In fact, most men have happy reminiscences of the time when, like Tony Lumpkin, a man was appreciated who could wind the straight horn—the good old times—

THE COACHING DAYS.

You have the whistle's startling scream,
 We had the guard's sweet winding horn,
The lake, the lone meandering stream,
 The waving hay, the yellow corn.
Your iron horse may snorting hiss—
 We had the gallant horse that neighs;
Ah! gone are now those hours of bliss—
 The olden times, the Coaching Days.



The golden times of Coaching Days.

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S. A. Mawell

'Twas then unto the freshening breeze
The hawthorn sweet its scent did yield
As on we sped, 'neath waving trees,
Past meadow green or golden field.
For us the reaper raised a cheer,
For us the wild birds tuned their lays.
Ah! Gone are now those pleasures dear
Of olden times—the Coaching Days.

Does woodbine still the roads twine o'er,
As oft it twined in Yorkshire dells?
Do heath-bells bloom as oft of yore
They bloomed full bright on Scottish fells?
Ah! Many a flower we gathered there
For loving smile or eyes' bright rays.
Now gone the hours, the flowers, the fair,
The golden times of Coaching Days.

But love in haste, it soon grows cold;
'Tis not from speed we gather joy.
Who travels fast will soon grow old,
E'en though in years he be a boy.
So let us sing of grey, and roan,
The chesnuts, blacks, the browns, and bays,
The good old horses that have gone,
The olden times, the Coaching Days.

But we might as well yearn for the Gretna Green blacksmith, a willing heiress, and a well-horsed post chaise, as for the coaching days of old. Still, the good school who left London with their Joe Mantons snug in their cases must be getting as thin of numbers as Waterloo veterans; and a little gossip to wake up old reminiscences like what has been written may not be out of place. Euston, St. Pancras, and Farringdon-street will see the same old familiar faces running hastily to and fro superintending the packing of gun-cases, portmanteaus, ammunition-boxes, and the thousand other things which a sportsman now considers it essential to take to the Highlands. Had he lived in the days of stage coaches, he would have had to have been content with much less than he has now; but then the "boot" had not the accommodation which has the modern passenger parcel van; and it was not everyone who could afford to post the whole way

north. It is not necessary to state that all articles of luggage should be carefully labelled, and the labels should be affixed so that they cannot be rubbed off or effaced. Zinc labels for railway travelling are much superior to those of paper, and are readily procurable and cheap. All those who have taken a lease of their moors for more than one season should have a number of such stamped with station, address, and full particulars. Everyone has heard of the Scotch porter who was in a dilemma with the brace of setters which had eaten off their addresses, and determined to send one down the line and the other up, while the gun-cases, of which he had two, he sent on to the station halfway between. If luggage is not properly labelled, depend upon it it will be bundled out at some wayside station, and the sportsman may find himself—as a friend of mine once did—with a 16 bore on the morning of the Twelfth and not a cartridge to fit; every other man being a patron of the universal “12.” For the better accommodation of dogs going long journeys, the north-running railway companies might arrange for a hunting van or two running north on certain days and so fitted that someone could travel along with them; the whole of them, of course, being carefully benched and secured. Of course a great many of the dogs have remained at the lodges all the season, but the number that is each year taken north in the first and second weeks of August is very large, while the accommodation provided for them is very scant indeed.

When in Highland quarters, the sportsman, if he be a man who is not above communing with his gamekeeper (and who should be?—indeed I have heard a sportsman who has killed many stags assert that a gamekeeper should live till he was three score and ten, and begin again and make it seven) he will find out much that will interest him. The day the laird goes out to have a look at the birds is of course the day that the birds always appear most abundant, for the laird has a good memory behind an eye which sees far more than double, and that without the adventitious aid of Long John, Campbeltown, or Glenlivet. The back wall of the keeper's lodge is always worthy of inspection, as there will be found the vermin caught on the land. The little sparrow-hawk that bothers Mother Grouse is there, and so, too, there will be found the falcon, though the latter is very rare. On Lochlomond side I once shot, at the close of a day's

shooting, a large Norwegian or hairy-legged buzzard, I remember, which rose high up in the dusk, and on which, walking along in a pensive mood, I pulled the right-trigger on an empty shell, having not thought it worth while reloading, being so near home when I fired, as I thought, my last shot. On an appeal to the left-barrel I brought him to my feet, as fine a specimen of that rare bird as ever was seen, and the first that had been known in the neighbourhood for fifty years.

The sea gull, the bird of the seaside school of poets, will also be found occasionally, for he is a regular Viking when inland, and many and many a nest he will harry and suck the eggs. Traps with a bit of bait are, therefore, frequently set in little rain-pools in the moor, where he is snapped by the beak and drowned in his own element. Since gull-feeding has become an amusement of deck passengers on the Caledonian Canal, gamekeepers on either side have become much troubled with them in the hatching season, and have little to say that is poetical in favour of the poet's angel of the beach. The hoodie crow is the bird of the keeper's hatred—indeed, he is the bill broker of the moors, a thorough blackguard, in whose favour neither shepherd nor keeper can say a word. "Whenever one is in range, pull on her as quick as you can," is the opinion of everybody, no matter on perch, on wing, or in nest. She is fond, of course, of carrion, but sometimes she takes a taste for something fresh, and a young rabbit or a young grouse just seems to suit her appetite. The best friend of the grouse is the shepherd, and he should always be treated with great civility. Make an enemy of the shepherd, and if you can afford to wait a season you will see, or, rather, not see, the result. The man who means to take a moor should study all these things if he wishes to become a true Highland Sportsman.

Arrived at some lonely little wayside railway station, a long drive may be before the sportsman ere he reaches his lodge, but with bracing air and lively mountain scenery, he will not find it unpleasant; while the driver may be able to tell him "who shoots over Sligachan," or about "the strange gentleman who is to be next neighbour at Glentarn, and who arrived yesterday with his leddies." If a stranger himself who has taken a moor in that neighbourhood for the first time, he may depend upon it that he will be keenly scanned by keepers, gillies, shepherds,

and everybody ; and it will not be until he has been a day on the hill that he will have created a favourable or an unfavourable impression. He will have many questions to ask, no doubt, and will feel anxious if he is a day ahead of the legal opening, to know what sport he is likely to have, if there are many cheepers, and so on, or if birds are strong on the wing. Concerning the olden times, it may be interesting to some to know that by an Act passed in the year 1707, grouse or muir fowl were granted a close time from 1st March to the 20th of June, literally their nesting and hatching seasons. This limited period was subsequently enlarged by an Act of George III., and the present closing and opening dates fixed respectively at 10th December and 12th of August, black game getting an extra eight days, viz., till 20th August ; the present statutory days for partridge and pheasant shooting being fixed by the same Act. As grouse will be plentiful in Leadenhall Market on the morning of the opening day, it may be well to mark the fact that each of the Railway Companies which is found carrying such game is liable to be fined £5 for every bird so carried before 12 o'clock on the night of the 11th, under the same Act. The Post Office is now the great medium for grouse delivery to private friends, and several boxes have been made, strong enough to stand, while light enough to come within the rules. Unless the birds have their feathers carefully dried and cleaned of all clotted blood, it is difficult to see how they can be so carried without tainting, to a certain extent, other parcels less perishable with a "gamey" smell, which may be all very well in the larder but must be objectionable as regards many things which will be sent by parcel post. The postman may no doubt accept them as free from taint at Inverness or Kingussie, but when they come to the delivery van in London they may be less pleasant to the nose. Indeed, it would be well for the postal authorities to insert the same recommendation in the instructions to the postal receiver, that game, being liable to taint other articles, should be enclosed in a separate postal bag. If birds, not very severely shot, have all their feathers dried, the blood removed, and some nice dry heather placed round them, they will not prove so objectionable. The morning of the 13th will be, therefore, a sort of morning after Boxing Day to all those who have friends going north, and for a week following grouse will come tumbling in from all corners

of the Highlands, which, but a few days before, had crowed on their native heathery hills, while the first streaks of sunlight began to show over the mountain-tops.

THE PICK O' THE BASKET.



HERE he is, did ye e'er see a fish
Rounder or plumper or fatter?
Himsel' jist a whole bonnie dish,
A trout jist new oot the watter.
Where did I kill him? ye say,
That's a question that's gey easy askit;
But I'd rather no answer the day
Where I killed the Pick o' the Basket.

Was it ta'en wi' the hare-lug or teal,
Or was it the wee heckum peckem?
Ye would like to be filling your creel?
Then get oot your bit snood, man, and sneck 'em.
You, my lad, must find oot for yoursel',
But the stuff is no maskit or caskit;
Tea, whiskey, or ale, I'll no tell
Where I grippit the Pick o' the Basket.

Oh, some folks can kill their big troot
By the fireside whiles when they're fuddled;
I have fished there mysel' without doot,
And don't say the word I have guddled,
But a gamer fish wi' the flee
I ha'e ne'er in my life yet been taskit;
The pride o' the river was he
The fish that's the Pick o' the Basket.

THE RACES WE'VE SAILED.



RAW round, my old mates, clap a sail o'er the skylight,
 And have one happy night ere the season is o'er.
 Light the lamp, boys, for cheer, and leave out the twilight,
 For lubbers and lovers who are walking on shore.
 We're stout and we're stiff, but we're still yet as hearty
 As in days that are past, we our spirits regaled ;
 When, on that bright morning, a young merry party,
 We met in this boat for the first race she sailed.

There was Jack there, and Jim, and Joe at the tiller—
 Alas ! for us all, he's unshipped, is poor Joe—
 When the gun went that morn right smart did he fill her,
 We were first o'er the line a full minute or so.
 The mark-boat ahead, boys, you mind we were laying,
 And we fetched it all right though the others they failed,
 Twice round it we gybed and at Commodore staying,
 Got the gun, boys, and won the first race that we sailed.

There's the mug here, my boys, how often we filled it
 On that night long ago, so we'll fill it again ;
 We drank health and long life, and as Providence willed it,
 Save poor little Joe we have grown to be men.
 Ah ! poor little Joe, his memory let's drink, boys,
 To the masthead that morning our old flag he nailed ;
 Then he steer'd us and cheer'd us, it's sad for to think, boys,
 He is not with us now in the boat that he sailed.

There are cups, too my boys, we won in light weather,
 In big topsail breezes in sweet Dublin Bay ;
 And the clock that ticks there we won 'neath the heather
 On the hills of the Clyde in a hard weather day.
 Of old days of glory, each prize tells a story
 Of the days of light winds and the days that we've bailed ;
 Every point in the race now rises before ye,
 In the races, my boys, that the old boat has sailed.

The old boat, my boys, though she never was cranky,
But stood stiff to her sail as she led them the way,
Can't quite hold her own with new boats long and lanky,
Every boat, like a dog, you know, has her own day.
But gaze at her prizes, her name it arises,
With the flag before which our rivals oft quail'd,
When all round we beat them, of all rigs and sizes,
Then a toast, my dear boys, to the races we've sailed



A FAREWELL SHOT.



HE invasion is over, and the Highlands of Scotland are again in possession of the Celts. The last Cockney has recrossed the Border, the last fisher has hauled up his line, and the last loch coble has been drawn up on the beach. The coaches are no longer running, the steamboats have ceased to ply, the grey reek no longer floats from the chimney of the lodge in the glen, and the land of brown heath and shaggy wood is brown, shaggy, and indeed shorn. The corn harvest, the grouse harvest, and the hotel harvest are over, and it is satisfactory to report that they have been most bountiful ones. The oats have been well secured, the grouse rents well ensured, and the hotel bills well endured. No one possibly but the poor crofters of the northern lands are dissatisfied, and, as the Duke of Sutherland says, you may as well expect gratitude from crofters as generosity from a railway company. The only thing one is forced to ask is, where is all this interest on £12,000,000 of capitalised sporting wealth, all the money that the sportsmen have spent, all the money that the tourists have spent? Has it all gone away like the ewigkeit that floated on de mountains' brow when Hans Breitman gave dat barty? It does not do, however, to be too particular about money matters in the Highlands, for if you argue about your bill you are invariably reminded of the shortness of the season, and that a certain percentage must be put on for nine months' climate, and a small amount for rainy weather in the early part of the summer, when the tourists, "wass ferra scarce, and there was waitters to pay for, and nothing else to do whatteffer."

"Ay, ay," said one of the latter worthies to us a few days ago. "It's my plessed opinion that this Meteoroshical Sossociety on the top of Ben Neevish will be a great curse to the Hiellands; ay, that it will, whatteffer, and Her Majesty should be petitioned 'gainst it. Every day they will be sendin' off tellekrammers, saying that there's snow on Ben Neevish, or that there is ferra pad weather whatteffer, and that a kret gale of wind is going to

be plowing, and there will not be one single customer come py the coach or the steamer. Pless you, there should never be no news of weather but coot weather effer sent at all." Possibly he may have truth if not reason in his argument, as his hotel commanded a view of the mountain. Still, it is not likely that the observers will couch the "tellekrammers" to suit his business.

But although the Highlands are generally deserted by tourists and sportsmen by the middle of October, it by no means follows that the good weather has all gone, or that the sporting season is over. Dusk falls early certainly, and there is an unmistakable bite in the breeze, while the showers which come scouring up the glens have a taste of ice-water in them. With heather fast browning, the rowan-berries shining red and bare, the hazel nuts scattered on the ground ready for the squirrel to hide, and the oak on the loch sides just beginning to yellow on the edge of the leaf, one feels, if a sportsman, far fonder of the Highlands than he could possibly do in August, when the tangle trips you up, and you land on your face, likely on the top of an ant-heap or a hornet's nest. In October the Highland air is so clear that you can hear the echo of the click of your gunlocks in the valley, let alone that of the report of your gun. It was, therefore, with pleasure that I followed my host to the loch edge on the brightest of October mornings, and took my seat in the boat, wherein already were seated the keeper and his son. Taking our seats in the stern, the two soon gave way to the "ashen breeze," and in the bright sunlight we pulled along the edge of the shore, the water being without a ripple, while the air had scarcely as much movement in it as would blow the smoke from the cigars clear of the wake of our coble.

"You will find our scrub here pretty close," said my companion, breaking the silence which the stillness of the scenery induced; "there are no rides cut, and you will have to do your best at what you see as smart as you can amongst the hazels. In the thin bits you will have a chance, but where it is thick it will take you all your time to get forward gun and all. The best way for you to do is to push a little bit ahead at these places, making yourself heard in case of danger, and then on a thin commanding spot keep a good lookout for a time."

"No chance of getting a stray pellet in the eye—eh?"

"Well, it is very hard to say. I saw a man lose an eye once from a pellet of No. 4, glancing at an angle of 45 degrees off a wire fence. However, there is only myself out with you, and I will not put a shot after ground-game where I cannot see clearly in front of it and before me, and take nothing on the wing low in the cover in your direction.

As he spoke the boat grated slowly on the beach, and Ben, the big black retriever, accompanied by the two Scotch terriers, a clumber and a Sussex spaniel, leaped ashore and sat upon their tails and awaited our disembarkation. The boat was pulled well up on the gravel, the keepers donned their bags, and filling the chambers of our guns we were ready. Passing up a little pathway alongside of a rivulet we found at a wicket a couple of stout lads, who had been asked to act as beaters. Both thoroughly knew the woods, being engaged as beaters upon the property, and, indeed, from experience at their daily vocation knew the haunts of most of the game in the covers. After a short conversation in Gaelic, in which the elder keeper seemed to be interested, the latter, turning round, said, "They have watched three-roe deer into the far end of the larch-wood this morning. So if we take a beat back down the loch-side here, up the young belting a bit, and cross over the turnip-field on the other side, we will be able to keep them between the loch and ourselves." This proposal was acquiesced in, and, shoving a pair of cartridges into the chambers of our guns, we plunged into the thick, natural cover which, as my host had explained when coming down in the boat, was without a ride or a roadway of any kind. In a few minutes we had almost lost sight of each other, though the occasional call of "shoo-cock—cock—cock" let us know our positions. The beaters rattled their sticks merrily against the trunks of the trees, and the whole loch-side rang with the noise. As we advanced our beat widened, and, being in the centre, I had sometimes very little idea as to where I stood. Occasionally one of the little Scotch terriers would come running past as if in roading a rabbit, but I had gone fully a couple of hundred yards before I had seen anything else possessing life. I was about to condemn the laird's lax system of pheasant-preserving, and warm my heart even with the thought of a hot corner at a battue, when *whirr* went away right in front a grand old cock. With two bounds

I smashed through the intervening thicket, and on to a rock, where, balanced on my left foot, I was just able to snap at him through the opening. Falling back on to both feet, I hearkened for the sound of his wings, but heard them not. Had I stopped him? Welcome sound! "Here, Ben—here, good dog, fetch him," I heard the old keeper mutter, and I knew I had just pulled on him in the last available second. Loading, I held forward again, and to the cry of "mark" on the left side, had a second cock, falling with a crash amongst the coppice in front of me. In clearer ground the terriers put up some rabbits, and with half a dozen pheasants all naturally reared we found we had a very good bag when we came to the top of the belting. Crossing the turnip-field my host stationed himself at a pass or gully in the larch-wood, and the keeper placed me in a most likely spot behind an old oak, with instructions to keep out of view and let all pass but the roe. It was tempting at times to see brown hares hopping past you that you could have killed easily, and grand old cocks rocketing away over the tree-tops, and steadying themselves for a long flight to some outlying cover. At last was heard the loud yelping of the Scotch terriers, followed by the call "Roe-deer away on the right." I could feel a pulse beating in my forefinger as I pressed it lightly on the trigger and looked past my shelter with my left eye. There was a slight rustling of the trees, and then the leader, a young buck, trotted gaily into view. At thirty yards off, and opposite, I let him have the right barrel and then the left, and had the satisfaction of seeing him roll slightly and fall just as my host's right and left rung out clearly. While the young keeper was unsheathing his clasp-knife with his teeth his father dashed past to see what the laird had done, and fifteen minutes afterwards we were seated, flask in hand, admiring the plump doe and gentle little fawn as they lay at our feet. After beating another cover successfully, we went down to the loch-side, and awaited the boat. In the dusk we pulled home, tired out, and thoroughly well contented with our day's farewell shot in the rough covers.

“HE WANTED AN ORDER.”

IT has been said, and with truth, that agriculture is behind the age. The farmer is slow to go ahead. He moves, and that is all ; but his movement is that of a ship that, with the anchor “awash,” has just got under way, and, with sheets trimmed, commences to spring and heel to the breeze. “Where ignorance is bliss ’tis folly to be wise” was a good enough excuse for him in the days of Gray ; but now in the days of Tennyson, “Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers,” is a general accusation applicable to him and his class. Forced, possibly, he has been, out of his rut ; rents have been raised, and labour has increased in price ; ignorance has ceased to be bliss, and, therefore, folly no longer wisdom. Possibly what the poets have more to complain of is the innovation of agriculturists, for the stern-thinking political economist, sees no beauty in anything unconnected with a balance-sheet. There are no “sickles” now in the field ; even the scythe has gone ; the song of the reaper has been silenced by the monotonous “click” of the horse-mower, and the ploughboy’s whistle is completely drowned by the wild scream from the heavy engine which drags the ponderous Cultivator—or, perchance, Steam Digger—from headland to headland. Nor has any poet yet arisen bold enough to raise rhymes for “cultivators” and “grubbers” and “tedders” and “smashers.”

New characters have come upon the scene. The commercial “bagmen” are possibly of a comparatively modern growth ; yet they are to be found in very large numbers generally in the neighbourhood of agricultural shows. Their samples are big, and range in weight from steam ploughs of several tons to light hayforks—“so light,” they will tell you, “that a child can handle them.” Generally trained mechanics are on the ground a few days previous to the exhibition, busily engaged in superintending the assistants sent on from the workshops to fit up the machines.

Then comes the work of disposal! There is possibly no more difficult fish to hook than a farmer, and no bigger flat when once landed. Like the salmon, he is invariably caught by something that *post mortem* examinations prove to be quite foreign to his maw. How many useless bone-bruizers, guano-crushers, oilcake nutters, more intended for sale than for work—he collects at his farm is only revealed at sales by auction, when the individual who has to compile the catalogue rummages the dark corners of the tool-house or the cart-shed. Perhaps they might have worked well enough if their purchasers had enough of mechanical knowledge to keep them oiled and in good order; but, like the scythe that was too frequently lost in the foliage of the hedge in which it was hidden at the close of the harvest, to be discovered next summer by some bird-nesting urchin, the reaper is allowed to stand in the open till the knives are literally fastened by the rust between the finger-bars. As to co-operating to buy implements, and save percentage, that could not be expected of a class who can rarely keep united for a fortnight as to the uniform price of the field-labourer's wages. Possibly it is to this uncommercial way of doing things that farming does not pay, as the system in which trade has to be pushed in machines and manures all increase the cost to the consumer. But to our story.

It was at "Merry Carlisle" in the last week of the "Royal" Show. On the Saturday previous—

I stood and gazed from Dalswinton wood,
To Criffel's green mountains, and Solway flood
Was quiet and joyous.

But the clouds gathered on the Cockermouth hills on Monday night, and on Tuesday the Eden was in flood, as in the days when Red Rowan and Wat of Harden, and the hardy border reivers of the North forded the brown flood with the dalesmen of Cumberland in pursuit. The old battles had been fought out in a more peaceful way in the show-rings of the Black Galloways and the fringe-legged Clydesdales; and there was leisure to stroll over the wooden-bridge, and up the long avenues of implements, at every stand in which the keen-eyed agent was on the outlook for a customer. There was none keener than Joe Reljambe, about the oldest and most knowing man in the trade. Full of stories, he could tell you most exciting romances of the

days when he had the audacity to introduce the reaping machine into Ireland, and recount them in a style which implied that he would not tell one a lie. He was generally in his element recording his reception at the station on his march to the field, escorted by the police, and the never-to-be-forgotten crop of pokers which stood erect on the roadside, all ready to be thrown at him. Wonderful romances, generally finishing up with the production of a note-book and the query—"Shall I book you one, sir?"

Joe was busy selling some chaff-cutters, when a genteel dandified young fellow, beautifully attired in what may be classed as country gentleman's undress, made his appearance.

"None of your clodhoppers," said Joe to himself; "a real Cumberland squire, and no mistake. Now" [to his friends], "excuse me, gentlemen, for a minute." ("I can book a good thing in a new country, *certain*," said Joe to himself again.)

"First-rate article for a nobleman's home-farm," said he, at once making certain of the grade of his customer, who was busily engaged in balancing himself on a sack-weighing machine. "Sold seventeen since we came into the yard, and have telegraphed for a dozen more. Best thing in the show, indeed."

"Capital machine," said the interested individual; "glad you have been so successful; but what I wanted to see you about was——"

"A reaper!" said Joe, interrupting him. "Well, it's singular you should have struck on our stand. Somebody told you, I suppose, about our winning that big prize last week. Big thing that—beat Wood's and Brown's, and the new American never showed up as soon as they knew we were going. You see, our new short connecting-rod, working as it does, direct from the driving-wheel, gives us a great advantage."

"I see," said the swell young man; "just so. But you make a slight mistake. I wanted——"

"One of our new patent double-roller two-speed self-feeding chaff-cutters? Well, there is the neighbour of the one we sold to Lord Blankacre this afternoon. Best machine in the market; goes itself almost, if well oiled."

"Just so; I quite understand," said the new comer, languidly; "but——"

"Come along into our place here," said Joe, who had made dead certain that he had caught a real live nobleman, and no

mistake. "It's very damp weather, and we'll better have a little of something to keep out the cold."

Entering those nice patent little portable shebeens now so common in show-yards, Joe bustled through amongst the lot of "common farmers" he had just left drinking plain whiskey and water. Ah, how many have wakened up in the morning, who have been so treated, with a headache and an account for a new machine they did not want! Joe, however, called to the barman behind the little slit for a bottle of champagne.

"I rather think, somehow, I may be taking up your time," said the stranger.

"How modest these well-bred fellows are, after all!" thought the implement agent. "No doubt about it—real Eton, Harrow, and Oxford mixture," he said to himself. "A young one, new into the estates; a fancy for shorthorns. Wants a new bolter mill, a couple of reapers, and no end of other things. Clean off half the stand, he will."

"Oh, no; not at all," he said. "Dear me, no!"

"Well, sir?" said "the Oxford Mixture," producing his card.

"Yes, sir!" said the sanguine introducer-of-reapers-into-Ireland, getting out his note-book.

"I merely wished to recommend to your firm our new patent lubricating oil, which is used——"

"IN ALL THE LARGEST FACTORIES IN THE WORLD," said Joe, quietly, with a sigh, rising, and moving, with the card in his finger, to the door, outside of which, from the deepest mud-pool, a young man, genteel-looking in appearance, was seen to rise the next minute, with additions to his costume he had not before he plumbed the depths of the pond.

* * * * *

Joe Reljambe was too wise to say much about his customer of the afternoon: but the matter somehow got wind, and when they sat down to dinner in the "Harp and Elephant," little Charlie Hopkins, the inventor of the new patent clod-crusher, as he tucked his handkerchief up to his chin, and commenced to mix a salad, asked—

"If Mr. Reljambe would be kind enough to *pass the oil!*"

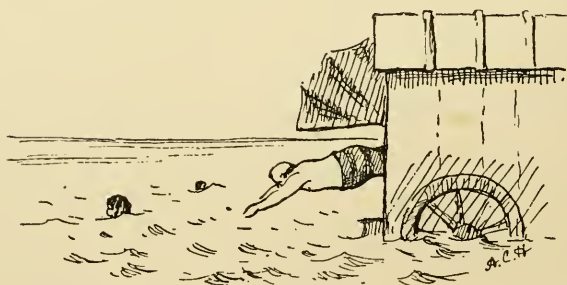
And big Jamie Harkins, of Bedford, who represented the

well-known sacker and bagger makers, Jenkins and Robinson, smilingly suggested that Mr. Reljambe was made on the "*self-lubricating principle*."

"Now what did he want, Joe—a rake, or a reaper?" said the Patent Horse Medicine-Chest man, who was always very serious, even when chaffing.

"*He wanted an order*, of course," said Bobby Naylor, the Baby Plough Engine maker, at the bottom of the table.

"And I gave him one," said Joe; "I GAVE HIM THE ORDER OF THE BATH."



OUR OPENING DAY ON THE MOORS.

“O to Scotland without money! To Scotland without money! Lord, how some people understand geography! We might as well set sail for Patagonia upon a cork jacket,” truly observes Jarvis in the “Good Natured Man,” and away up here we re-echo his assertion indeed. “Hech me,” we hear our landlord say, “come to Scotland without siller indeed! To Scotland without siller! Hech me, how some folks dinna understan’ mainners; ye may as weel try to jump ower Ben Neevish on a puddock’s back.” Yes, you must take money to Scotland, more especially if you start there in the autumn, and after all you need not expect too much for it. “Send me on all your customers, and I’ll send ye on all mine,” is the motto of Duncan and Dougall, and the whole clan of hotel-keepers, and they do send you on with a vengeance. You have scarcely got to sleep for the snores of one of your numerous shake-down bedfellows on the floor (“all the reklar peddles is needed for the leddies,”) than clang, clang, goes a steamboat bell, and in half-an-hour you are off for fresh scenes and fresh landlords. One thing is certain, you do not need to care how your boots are cleaned in the morning when sailing, if you mean breakfasting on the boats.

“Hey, boots! ho, boots! how the deuce is this?” was the call on all sides but a few mornings before the Twelfth at the coffee-room door of a well-known Oban hotel, where twelve male passengers lay down together on the floor; “I’ve only got one of my boots blacked.”

“Ay, Ay,” was the canny reply; “I brush all the right foots at a time, and then I comes down and brushes the left foots, if you has time to wait; fair play is a shewel, and there’s the steamboat’s bell, now,” and he grinned a genuine Celtic grin, as we rushed off to catch the steamer rounding into the pier, after paying dearly for bed and attendance, the attendants being of a class which you would rather do without in a bed. Oh, but it is a *dear, dear* bonnie country,

Where sportsmen have to pay, tis fact, for every Scottish deer,
 Just twice the price they'd have to pay for one good English steer ;
 Where every grouse they have to kill costs, ere it is made cold,
 Just one good ounce of English lead, and one good ounce of gold.

But with the brushed and unbrushed boots under a table which contains all the good things of a Scotch breakfast, we have little reason to complain, and soon are sailing, not with a free sheet but with free-going paddles, through Kerrara Sound, our cry still being "Northward Ho!" We have all classes of company on board, Frenchmen, Yankees, Germans, Italians, Spaniards, aye, even Japanese, who seem to take wonderfully to Scotland. The herrings, and the ham and eggs, the Finnan haddocks, and the mince collops, not to mention the Dundee marmalade and the scones, soon disappear rapidly, for in these smooth Scotch waters, with their long, river-like inland windings, the most inexperienced of sailors need not be afraid of sea-sickness. Unfortunately the decks are haunted with itinerant musicians, mostly pipers, who ought to be utilised down below for "forced draught" purposes, *i.e.*, blowing up the engine fires. At last, after a most pleasant sail, we are (a full boatful of passengers, but only two with myself bent on grouse) unshipped at a small Highland ferry, from which in the morning we will have to make our way as best we can to the Lodge, which the grouse agent says is conveniently situated to Mr. MacBrayne's steamboat route. "Convenient" in a grouse agent's list means "thereabouts." As the boat grates on the beach the landlord comes down rubbing his hands and escorts us up to his "web" of a hotel. A well-known tune is coming from the bar-room as we enter, and we are tempted into parodying Burns, for does it not say—

Southrons wha at Oban bled,
 Southrons wha on steamboats fed,
 Welcome here unto your bed,
 For you'll have to pay.
 Now's the day and now's the hour,
 Towerists, wha hae come to tower,
 Prices ye'll pay fower times fower,
 Ere ye gang your way.

But the strappin' lassie leaves the piano to supply our orders at the little bar, and her face, which is most pleasant, gives us encourage-

ment. We recollect, too, that it is at the great big hotels which are managed by boards of directors in Edinburgh that the prices are "piled up," and that in the little corner out-of-the-way-places folks are pretty safe, even when the rooms are nearly all taken up. Having secured our rooms, the next thing was to secure a trap, resolving to go no further that night. This we succeeded in doing, and then our mind was at rest. We found the landlord as good as his bill was light and lenient next morning. He had been a gamekeeper himself, and with what money he had amassed he had retired into the hotel, being a widower with an only daughter. He seemed only too glad to accept our invitation to join us in the smoking-room, where he told us all about the grouse moors in the neighbourhood and a hundred anecdotes, of old days on the heather. We might have sat with him till sunrise, but sleep was hanging heavily on our eyelids, and, bidding him good-night, we retired. The next morning, after breakfasting at eight o'clock, we saw the four-wheeled trap, which looked like something between a ferry-boat and gig, packed with gun-cases, cartridges, and baggage, and, taking our seats, were soon whirling out to the wee, lone lodge of Sheepfank, fifteen miles off. We were not in a hurry, having a day to spare, and so let the nag go easy up the hills. Early in the afternoon we were safely fixed for the night, and in the cool Highland eve unpacked our own guns outside at the doorway. One of our party tried the burn for trout, and raised as many as filled the frying-pan, over which presided the gamekeeper's wife, by no means a bad cook, as the old hotel-keeper had assured us, she having served with him for some years. Her husband was, so far as we could see, an experienced keeper, but rather too garrulous, and far too fond of telling, what in Lowland men would have been called, "whoppers," but which are dignified by Professor Blackie and others into simple Highland romances. He was a "second-sightist" of the highest degree, and could tell most wonderful stories about the Evil Eye and the fairies and the brownies.

"How is it, Duncan," said our irrepressible young wag, on his first northern expedition, on examining the dead vermin at the back of his own little lodge, "that you have got no dead water-kelpies? Surely they kill game?"

"Od, bless ye, sir," was his exclamation, "dinna say that, or

maybe it's in the little burn we'll baith be drooned thegither. Eh me, wha daur shoot a water-kelpie."

"And what for not, or a brownie either?"

"Od, for my sake dinna talk that way, sir. It's little ye ken the power they have. There was once——"

But here Duncan started on a brownie story, just as his wife announced that tea was waiting, and the savoury smell of the newly-fried trout drew us away.

Get early home, and don't sit late ;

Early up and then shoot straight

is our motto, though we don't believe in rushing as if the grouse were only on the ground for a forenoon. Next morning saw a merry breakfast party, and the "crack" going as merrily as a gun-lock ; and after just one little whiff we joined Duncan, who had with him a very fine pair of Gordon setters, also a wonderful old pointer that the last lessee had left him as a present. We were certainly not strong in dogs, but we were quite equal to the hill we were on. By this time the terrible thunderstorm of the Twelfth of August is an old story. For many years it will be remembered as that on which Lord Lauderdale was killed by lightning on his shooting pony ; when hailstones rattled down on the sportsmen, and hay-ricks all over the North were washed away by burn spates. How the atmosphere hung about like a blanket, only those who were in the North will recollect ; how the mountains seemed to bombard each other across the Highland lochs with flashes and sheets of forked lightning, only will they who were witnesses recollect. It was not till seven brace and a half had fallen to our guns that it rolled upward from the southward, and the first flash let us know what we might expect. The lodge was away down in the glen afar off, and, resolving to be as near as possible if the storm came nearer, we turned and shot towards it, the grouse seeming to sit closer under the gathering gloom. But as the reaper when lightning flashes feels afraid of his hook, so the sportsman feels somewhat afraid of his gun when the fire is literally spreading low on the heather like a sheet. The dogs, too, were not steady, and, feeling the coming "rain plump," we sought the edge of a small cliff on the face of a burn. There, while it flashed and roared, and rained till the warm heath steamed, we stretched with our backs close to the rocks, and the dogs at our feet, wishing we

were safe out of it and snug in the lodge parlour. To beguile the time, Duncan began to tell us stories about great thunderstorms and narrow escapes.

"Yess," said he, "I wass wance ferreting rabbits on a winter's day down in the glen there, and, eh, it did come in with a rattle. Well, all at once I sees something flash, and I felt something warm on my legs, but I paid no attention whateffer. Well, when I went home, Mary, that's my wife, says, 'Duncan, what in all the world heff you been doin' with your stockings?' 'Nothing whateffer,' says I. 'Well they're just singed right, down both sides useless,' says she, and so they wass, shust burnt off me with the lightning, which had gone through between my legs. But I knew of a more narrow escape than that."

"Oh, Duncan, Duncan, come now!" was the general exclamation.

"Oh, yess, I did; it was a heffier thunderstorm than this, too, and there wass a gentleman I was workin' the dogs to over at Fort William. It was years ago, and he was shootin' with an old mussel-loader which had a steel ramrod. He was an old Major of sojers, and cared for nothing. He had been under fire afore, he said, with something pehind it, too, and did not mind plank cartridges. Well, he had shust killed a white hare, and wass loadin' again, and got in the wad on his powther, and was ramming it down, when the lightning it catches on his steel ramrod——"

"And knocks him to pieces, Duncan, of course?"

"Nothing of the kind. It shust run down the barrel o' the gun, and went out at the nipple, making a hole at his foot, and purnin' all the powder with it."

"And was he not hurt, nor the gun damaged?"

"Not a bit, neither; and he killed 22½ brace of grouse that afternoon." An enormous peal of thunder burst overhead, and possibly this somehow frightened the story-teller, for he whispered in a pause in its rumbles, "It wass an old ten-bore gun, and worn wide at the nipple, maybe."

We had not exhausted Duncan's wild stories when the storm went off, but being drenched to the skin, having been forced from our shelter by the brown spate that came down the burn, we shot homewards, taking a slightly circuitous route. There

was little wind, however, to blow the mist, or rather steam, away, and our coveys invariably disappeared in directions unknown. The moss in places was sodden with moisture, and the peat-holes were filled with fresh rain-water, so that it was not comfortable at times to jump the hags. The Gordons ranged close and worked admirably, liking the moisture better than the dry electric heat, and under Duncan's directions we got some capital shooting on the "clumpy" heather along the slopes at the foot of the hill, our lost coveys in the mist having gone downward. Amongst some alders we came upon a covey of young black game, and though mistakes might have been made in the mist, we succeeded in leaving them alone. Some popping at rabbits in the kail-yard behind the lodge, and we went inside after securing 15½ brace, two hares, and three rabbits—quite content, and glad to get into dry clothes. In the evening we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, having had wonderful brownie stories from the old keeper, who was quite an edition of fairy tales. Most of them he no doubt had originated himself, but had forgotten the source of their derivation, as most Scotchmen do. It was quite enough for us, however, that they were amusing. With a modest nightcap we wound up an early evening, determined, we said, to have bigger bags next day, and all singing—

Oh, happy the days we aye spend on the heather,

For sweet is the sight of the-grouse on the wing ;

No matter to us how wild be the weather,

For rain, wind, or hail we do not care a fling.

With our gun aye our dogs we will follow with gladness,

So long as we've strength and so long as we've health !

Leave sorrow to townsmen and cities to sadness,

But out on the moors, we'll aye be on the Twelfth.

Oh, prescribe will the doctors their pills and their potions,

Feel your pulse, and advise you at meals to take care ;

Of their drugs aye for me you may swallow whole oceans,

Prefer will I aye a tramp in fresh air.

For happy are we when the grouse wings are whirring,

And richest are we whose health is our wealth !

Then, so long as we live our legs we'll be stirring,

And knock down our birds aye on August the Twelfth.

'TWEEN THE FLAGS.



NOW at the post each steed it is pawing,
 As each jealous jockey at jockey doth glance
 Bold at its bit each horse now is gnawing,
 And now at a walk see ! they steady advance,
 Holding hard till the starter his banner shall lower ;
 Ahead now it flutters, the reddest of rags,
 'Tis down now, my boys ! and they rush to the fore
 Yet each man is mindful to ride 'Tween the Flags !

Ride wisely, each jockey, don't mind what the pace is.
 Be cool and keep straight, no rushing ahead,
 'Tis not always the swift that gain steeplechases :
 They are oft at the finish who at the first led.
 Now down is the brown, while the grey topples over ;
 Pull aside ere the scramblers down half the field drags !
 You have time, though even in mid-air you hover,
 Riding aye as you should when you ride 'Tween the Flags !

Now rouse up your horse and keep him well going ;
 Don't mind who's behind—give never a look,
 But keep his head straight and your heart o'er be throwing
 For you've got to fly over or land in the brook.
 Some are o'er, some are in, you can tell by the splashing,
 Yet sail away on and make use of your jags ;
 Get him into his stride and right onward be dashing,
 Aye minding your eye that you ride 'Tween the Flags !

You are half o'er the course, so be careful and clever,
 You are safe booked for home when over the wall ;
 And don't mind the rushers—weak horses are ever,
 Half ready at finish to flinch or to fall.
 Safe over again ! now the pace come be mending,
 And ne'er mind the horse that now faltering lags !
 One single field more, and for home you are bending,
 Going straight as one should when he rides 'Tween the Flags !

Now close by the rails for home you are steering,
Going easy and well, with the race well in hand ;
The last hurdle o'er, now hark to the cheering,
Which loud greets the winner from all on the stand
Now back to the scale—'tis all right, they are crying,
While the groom leads away the most gallant of nags ;
'Tis " My dear boy, well done ! " and each man's now vying
In praising the style which you ride 'Tween the Flags !



HALTERED AND ALTAR'D.

A TALE OF THE HUNTING FIELD,

CHAPTER I.



HERE is perhaps no person in Society of which Society—and that possibly with reason—is more afraid of than the heiress-hunter. The hawk which hovers over the barnyard does not inspire more terror in the breast of the old hen with her chickens gathered round her than his presence does in the mind of the matron who has a family of grown-up daughters, all ticketed for the matrimonial market. Though it is by no means necessary that an heiress-hunter should be handsome, as a rule he will, even if ugly, consider himself to be so. Good looks render him more than usually dangerous, and when backed up by fascinating manners and accomplishments he may be said to be irresistible.

Heaven help the man who brings him to the house which contains such a family as I have mentioned, for he will have a bad time of it ever afterwards, and the man who takes him on board the yacht of his friend who has daughters portioned or portionless may look out for squalls. But while heiress-hunters are despised by the fair sex, heir-hunters are allowed to try every device, and throw out every allurement for the purpose of bringing their game to hand. They are privileged to "set their cap," as they call it, to catch anyone, and, though we look at a man who is caught by a cap-setting woman, however captivating, as a kind of hen-pecked bachelor only fit for exhibition at a poultry show, we must say that they are exceedingly successful; far more so indeed than those of the opposite sex whom we read of occasionally as marrying fortunes and getting a girl thrown into the bargain, like a Scottish cattle dealer's luck-penny. In matrimony, as in everything else in these days of huckstering, there is no doubt a market in which the law of supply and demand works the same as on the Stock Exchange, the scarcity of what are known as eligible men having a tendency towards the increasing of the stock of what are known to married folks and bachelors as old maids.

Heir-hunting—I hope no one will have the audacity to make a pun upon the word—though common in all ranks of Society, is best pursued in the country, where, from the small curate, the purest man in the provinces according to the cloth he wears, up to the squire of broad acres, every bachelor is considered fair game, and that, too, at all seasons of the year, for there is no Close Time allowed them. Lucky indeed is the man who eludes their grasp, and the hard-riding hunter has never had more narrow escapes in the field to tell to his friends in the smoking-room after a good run than the ones he gasps over and gulps down with a glass of wine in his ruminations, which he has had from marriage. “So-and-So, take a wife! My boy, don’t tell me. I’ve known him from his youth. He’s not the marrying sort,” you hear every day; and if you leave your old place for a year or two on duty or on sport, you come back to find him driving his own Perambulator as tame as the elephant in the Zoo when the keeper is kind enough to give the children a ride on his back.

“What a nasty, selfish, bachelor-like sentiment!” do we hear some lady reader exclaim? Just so, but is it not all true? However, to the commencement of our story.

It was a cold, dampish, raw afternoon in December, when with that particular jog-trot with which hunters like their horses to sling along homewards after a hard day, the huntsman of the Blankshire trotted into the little village of Cloverside, the pack tired and weary at his heels. The first whip was, as usual, within conversation distance, and the talk in which the pair were indulging was, as usual, of the day’s sport, mixed up with remarks about the members of the field and the horses they rode, with divers opinions rudely expressed about the new comers, broken at times by sharp calls to transgressing hounds.

“Don’t know what she be at all, Jack,” said the huntsman, “but she don’t need no heddicating, I can see, as to crossing a country, and she know more about ’unting than some o’ the young swells as thinks they does. Wonder what she’s here for, eh?”

“Don’t know. Can’t make her out, but there ain’t been such a flier as rides in a ’abit since I come to this country.”

“Nor I. When I was in Berkshire and a bit nearer Lunnion, we used to have some rum ’uns, them, you knows, Jack, as

ain't married or ain't single. You knows the sort I mean, Jack?"

"Course I does," was the whip's reply. "Good to look at and rum un's to go too, they was."

"Well, Jack, but she ain't that; maybe she's one o' them as you sees when you goes to the play."

"Just what I was a thinkin', sir; but, bless yer, how could she handle a hoss the way she does unless she had been a brought up to it? Lor, you should a seed how she saved her hoss over the plough and how she picked him up now and then at the awkward places, an', Lor bless yer, a' couldn't ha' done it myself, sir,—I was a thinkin' she might ha' been a circus."

"Circus be blowed, Jack; she's too clever for a sawdust; them circus girls is good enough jumpers on a hoss's back, but they ain't no use on the back of a jumpin' hoss. No, no; she ain't a sawdust. Hang me, but I'll give it up. 'Ere we are at the Bull."

As the old huntsman drew bridle he looked round in the saddle, and saw to his surprise the lady of whom they had been talking so freely, just drawing her horse from a trot into a walk. They made way for her, and she called upon the groom to bring her some gruel of lukewarm meal and water for her steed, a nice bay, with neat head, clean short limbs, and a look of breeding all over. In a few moments the lad returned with a pail containing the desired mixture, and the animal having satisfied itself, she passed a coin to the boy, and bowing to the huntsman, who was handing back an empty pewter jug, passed on.

"Blowed, Jack, if she don't look thoroughbred all over," said the huntsman to his companion, who was blowing the froth from off a jug of bitter; "ain't no sawdust about her, eh?"

"Rattling good sort, no matter for what country."

"Looks a little curby about the hocks, didn't she?" said whip No. 2, who had closed up for his turn of refreshment, and was of course ignorant of the previous conversation.

"Curby-hocked, Bill! what be you a talking of?"

"Why the chestnut mare as she's a riding."

"Bill! Didn't I allus say you had only a heye for one thing—that was a hoss; but for a 'ound or the next thing as is most beautiful or 'andsome—women—you ain't in it, nohow. We

was talking about the girl herself, man. Where does she 'ang about, I say, Master Strapper?"

"Just come to Lilyoak Hall, about five miles on. Don't know much about her save as she goes out ridin' sometimes with somebody as looks like her father, or her uncle, or summat. They rides allus good horses."

"And they rides 'em well," was the remark of the old huntsman, as he knocked his horse into its old jog trot, and set off home for the kennels.

CHAPTER II.

THE BLANKSHIRE HOUNDS

WILL MEET

FRIDAY, 18TH DECEMBER, HAZELTREE HALL, 11.30.

THIS was the top line in the card of fixtures which the country postman had just brought to Lilyoak House at noon on the day on which our story opened.

"Hazeltree Hall," said the tall military-looking gentleman with grey hair and grizzled moustache, who received it at the door, "why, that is the residence of this young Sir Benjamin Hazel, who has just come into the property. Ahem! good looking if he's like his father; rare old family, and with the acres unburdened should be worth twenty thousand a-year. Well, if she does not manage to put the halter on there I'll give it up—the jade, she's every bit as skittish as her mother. Three offers she's thrown away in thrice as many months, and the worst of the lot wasn't worth less than £10,000 a year.

"The first was a snob, she said, and she was not far wrong; the second was a complete muff, not fit to be the husband of any woman; and when I talked about the third she laughed at me and asked if I did not think of taking a wife myself, a nice remark for a girl to make to her widowed father who has steered clear of all feminine temptations for her own sake. As he was five years my senior, and was foolish enough not to hide it in our conversations about old times, so anxious was he to show off his military knowledge, I daresay she was quite right. But let her have her own way—just let her have her own choice, a young good-looking 'sub,' not half as well off as the sergeant-major of

his regiment, and not as much money as would pay a turnpike, let alone keep a horse. Hazeltree Hall! whew!" whistled the Colonel, as he finished his ruminations and placed his card on the dining-room mantelpiece, "that looks a likely place for a find, anyway, of some kind, though it may not hold a fox."

Colonel Dexter was not a poor man, though he could not be called a man of means. He had his half-pay at the time, and a bit of money invested in a Welsh lead-mine brought always as much to him annually as would allow him to steer his way clear of debt. In a "horsey" sense he was rather accomplished, being gifted with what is known as good hands, a nice, well-balanced temper, and a capital eye for choosing a hunter. Horses "made" by him rarely made mistakes, and always fetched more at the end of a season than the beginning, else possibly there would not have been much to invest in mining shares. His accomplished daughter, the subject of the huntsman's remarks, inherited her father's love of horseflesh, and having been carefully educated in cross-country work, few of her sex dared to try a cutting-down match with her in the hunting-field.

"Nothing like the saddle for squire-catching," said the old fellow to himself many a time as he watched her, in a style which was worthy of a jockey at Aintree or Croydon, land clear over everything, and choose her own line again with reins held as lightly as a lad would angle a minnow.

It was a lovely forenoon, that of the 18th of December, when the fixture for the Blankshire was set down for Hazeltree Hall, whose youthful heir had just attained his majority, his father having died and left him a minor when he was but twelve years of age. The estates had not only been left unburdened but there was a large sum of money over and above—something quite unusual now-a-days—and this had been so well managed by the executors that young Sir Benjie, as he was called sometimes, was worth when he was twenty-one years of age something like £15,000 per annum. There was, therefore, a considerable amount of cap-setting amongst the ladies of the country, and rumour—busy, as usual—had given his hand away several times. Rather gay and rather good-looking, he was not, however, to be caught by stale bait, nor was he to be matched or mated like a prize dog by the group of maiden aunts who made him their sole study. With joyous face he received each party as they

drove up to the "muster place," we do not like the word "meet," but when Miss Dexter, in the neatest of hats and hunting costumes, drove up a stately stepping little bay mare, in a nice little dog-cart, her father seated on her left hand, and a natty groom behind, he uttered an exclamation of surprise, while he blushed a deeper shade of crimson than that of the coat he wore.

Miss Dexter seemed also a little surprised in turn, but with a considerable amount of tact contrived to conceal it by directing her eyes straight between the ears of the mare, which fidgeted a little as the groom jumped to its head.

Fortunately a gentleman on horseback, who knew the Colonel, as also the young Squire, well, and guessed that they must be strangers to each other, was wise enough to step forward and introduce them. What was the cause of the blushing? the reader will ask. The answer must be given by the soliloquies of the lady and gentleman.

"My fair companion in my railway journey!" said young Hazel to himself.

"The gentleman I met in the railway carriage!" said Miss Dexter, finishing up with the lady-like remark to herself, "How funny!"

"Your father and I were boys together at Eton, Sir Benjamin, but fortune willed it so that we never met more than twice afterwards, but those meetings were always happy ones, and the partings were very sorrowful. You very much resemble him—very much indeed," and the Colonel, as he held the young fellow's hand in his own, looked straight into the honest face of the curly-headed youth, whose bright eyes could scarcely keep from wandering in another direction. "Your face almost makes me feel a boy again, but gout and rheumatism are all here to give me the contradiction, let alone Nellie here, who is about the same age as yourself, if my memory serves me right."

Had Miss Dexter looked up to the windows and seen the cold grey eyes of the maiden aunts fixed upon her she might for a moment or two have felt somewhat abashed; but with a merry little laugh, a smile, and a twinkle of the eye which seemed to say, "How do you like railway travelling?" she was soon as much at her ease as if she had known the young Squire all her lifetime.



The whole field moved to an outlying covert

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and Bradley

In a few minutes afterwards all were in the saddle, and the whole field moved forward to an outlying covert which rarely failed to hold a fox, and was so situated that if the varmint did get away he was bound to give them a good clear five miles. Miss Dexter was riding her favourite—a nice little mare full of breeding, with the neatest of heads and necks, shortbacked, and neatly turned in all her joints, while the Colonel was upon a genuine specimen of an English hunter, long, low, and strong, and full of spirit. The movement forward was a sharp one, something indeed like a cavalry attack, and, to the joy of all, hounds streamed in one side of the covert to dash right out on the other behind a gallant old dog-fox, which was said to have yielded many a good run in the previous season. Never minding the bustle, the Colonel, with his daughter at his side, chose his own line, and after going a field or two they found themselves nicely placed with the hounds, having as companions in the first flight the M.F.H., the huntsman, and whips, and to the delight of the military veteran, the young baronet going hard and well on a big striding thoroughbred. With a burning scent the pace was very fast, and soon the crowd were left far behind. Like the finished horsewoman she was, Miss Dexter on her spirited little mare showed the way at times over the biggest of jumps (for the country was noted for big jumps), with an ease and a gracefulness which would have delighted a Mason or an Oliver, and which quite captivated the young baronet, as it also did the old huntsman and the first whip on a previous day. After going about four miles, Reynard, finding the earths stopped, no doubt, bent sharp to the left, making his point for Barnock, a covert away on the rising ground five miles off, and huntsmen, whips, and all knew they were in for a regular stretch. Yet the pace did not slacken in the least, and the Colonel, who rode fifteen stone, saddle and all, found that he would have to part company with his daughter, who was still going like a bird. So he dropped back, and left the baronet to go on in attendance, a duty which the latter seemed to be very anxious for. Dipping into the hollows, they rose the slight hill faces, still going straight and steady, till the next point was reached. Reynard found no rest there, however, and was forced onward, though tired and weary.

When the Colonel reached the covert on the hill he strained his eyes right and left, and at last, shading them with his hand, he could detect something away in the far distance like a flock of pigeons. Disappearing, he saw two or three objects, which might have been cows or horses, rise the slopes and go out of view again.

"Well, good horse, that fox deserves to live at any rate, though these hounds deserve his carcass, but you and I'll gently make for home; we have had enough for one day."

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While the Colonel in the shades of the evening was pacing up and down the gravel walk by the lodge at Lilyoak gate, anxious to know about his daughter, and hearkening at times for the sound of horses' feet, he saw the lights of lamps about a mile down on the road, and the next minute he heard the "crunching" sound of wheels upon the strewn "macadam." In a few minutes it had reached the lodge, and great was his delight at finding that it contained his daughter and the young baronet. "Sixteen miles, what do you think? and only ourselves left in at the finish! Pulled him down in the open, too."

"You don't say so!" said the Colonel.

"There it is, papa; will you believe it now?" she said, holding up the brush, but poor Fanny was so dead beat that I was obliged to leave her behind. She could scarcely move a leg, but she is being well cared for."

"Drive up to the house," said the Colonel, "you must be as tired as your horses," and as the carriage moved off he muttered to himself, "She's put the halter over at last."

CHAPTER III.

THERE is not much of our little story to tell. It is eight years now since bonfires blazed brightly on every hillside in the country, but it is only three months since I last saw them. I was steering close to the wind down through the lively Sound of Sleat in the Western Highlands, when we met a yawl carrying at her mizen the white ensign, which proclaimed her to belong to one of the Royal Yacht Squadron. Steering near, I could observe a lady

seated on the weather side with a child on either side, while a gentleman, whose features I thought I knew, held the tiller. "Get your foresail to windward, dip your flag, and run up your number," I said to the skipper, and it was done in a twinkling, for we carried our signal flags.

The yawl "dipped" in return, then ran up her signals. Making out the numbers, I turned up Hunt's List and found that she was the *Nellie Dexter*, 120 tons, Sir Benjamin Hazel.

"Ease off the fore sheet," I shouted, as I shoved the tiller from me, and looked round on the fast-fading yacht, as I thought to myself of the way the baronet has been

HALTER'D AND ALTAR'D.



THE ANNASONA.*

A FORECASTLE DITTY.



OW glasses round, we're homeward bound,
 The season it is over,
 And we may tell, we've sailed right well,
 From Clyde all round to Dover.
 A faster boat no man has got,
 Nor e'er has yet been known a
 Yacht to sail in breeze or gale,
 So well as Annasona.

From truck to stem our little gem,
 With winning flags is trailing,
 For twenty-nine we crossed the line,
 And won them by fair sailing.
 From every size, we took the prize
 And beat them all alone, a
 Fig for rig, from yawl to brig,
 With darling Annasona.

If winds did fail, we'd give her sail,
 Then would she buckle to it,
 When reefed down short, she was the sort,
 My boys, to plough right through it.
 Close hauled or free, in breeze or sea,
 Or yet, my boys, when on a
 Wind she'd go blow high, blow low,
 The flying Annasona.

Now hip, hooray! ere up we lay,
 And when the night is early,
 Three cheers we'll give, and say long live
 To brave Will Fife of Fairlie.
 Be long his days, and strong his ways,
 To build some fresh Fiona,
 And may he launch, aye boats as staunch
 As darling Annasona.

* The Annasona, built by Fife, of Fairlie, and sailed by Captain W. O'Neil, was the celebrated 40-tons cutter which headed the winning list of yachts in 1882.

PLOVER-SHOOTING.



HERE are, I dare say, thousands of people who pause in their perambulations through the streets of London opposite the game-dealers' to examine the dead birds hanging at the windows, who do not know a grouse from a partridge or a partridge from a plover. Folks in the country would, perhaps, find it difficult to believe this ; but if they had taken a turn along the Strand one September with the writer, and seen the windows of shooting-coat vendors filled with stuffed game, amongst which were ptarmigan, of all birds, feeding along with partridges on the tops of sheaves of wheat, they would not doubt the assertion. It cannot, however, be expected that town-bred people can have a full knowledge of country things and country practices—any more, indeed, than our country cousins can have a knowledge of the manners and customs of people born within the sound of Bow bells, and who have never been out of London. It was while taking a stroll through Leadenhall the other day, watching the sales of feathered dainties for Christmas feasts, that my eye rested upon a full string of lapwings, or green-plover, alongside a string of dead golden-plover, that I began to think of the happy days I had had, gathering the eggs of the former in Scotland, about the time of Easter, and the rattling good day's sport I had in shooting the latter about Christmas time. The former I have never pulled, and never will pull, a trigger on, as it is one of the most harmless, most gentle, and most useful of birds, as the farmer well knows, and, though I may have lifted an egg or two at a time in my boyhood, I am glad to say that I have never killed any. To shoot one is to perform no great feat, as it will go flip-flap over your head at times, and, not being a fast flyer or a very wary bird, you can, if at all clever, bring it down as easy as you would a maizefed hen-pheasant at a *battue*. With the golden-plover it is, however, very different, for the latter has about it a good deal of the wariness of its oft-times companion, the curlew, and seven of the latter are said to be enough for a sportsman's lifetime,

though if I have killed one I have killed twenty, and don't feel it time to lay down the gun yet. But what about plover-shooting? asks the reader. Well, that is just what I am coming to, and I make it a rule to stalk up to my subject with the pen just as I would do if it were a living, moving, fast-on-the-wing thing of life, and I had my gun in my hand.

It was Christmas time (or rather I might say it was New Year's Day time, seeing that in the north Christmas is not recognised, while the opening day of the year is baptised with buckets of whiskey), about eleven years ago, that I was asked to give a tenant-farmer on the Ayrshire seaboard a day's rabbit-shooting, as he was cleaning out the vermin on the borders of some fields, which he had made up his mind to crop. The land, which was of a sandy and dry, porous nature, just what bunny likes in the breeding season, had been lying in grass, and had been eaten almost too bare by them to admit of successful snaring, for you must have a little roughness about for snares, and a hard December frost had made trapping an absolute impossibility. Snow in the atmosphere, too, had kept them from bolting, for your rabbit is a rare hand at a weather forecast, and so nets were not of much use. Good hands with the gun, uncovered holes, and smart ferrets, therefore, were what were needed, and, guns and ferrets doing their duty, we had bowled over something like 160 couples in three days, and were feeling that "fur-lifting" was getting somewhat monotonous.

"What say you to an off-day at the plovers?" said Young Dan, my host's son. "There's a rare lot of them gathering down now about the shore-edges. They must have been having a hard time of it somewhere."

"The very thing, my boy," was my reply. "I've been having my eyes on these flocks that have been whistling past us for the two days, thinking always they'd come near enough to let me put two barrels in amongst them; see, here come a lot now."

Dan put his little finger to his mouth, and gave a close imitation of their call "*Phe-oo! phe-oo!*" and it made the leader bend to the right for a moment, but only a moment, and on they swept.

"No use," said the young farmer, laughingly; "they must be stalked, and it needs a couple to do it at least, with a couple of lads to help; many a round good lot of them I've killed."

A rumbling sound under our feet stopped both of our tongues and a pair of rabbits, one going to the right and another to our left, set our guns ablaze, both being doubled up without the second pull of a trigger from either of us. As the ferrets showed signs of getting sleepy from long, hard hunting, and might, therefore, take it into their heads to lie up for a whole night if we persisted in working them any more, we lifted them, and put them in their comfortable little grass-lined boxes, and started for home. Just as we had neared the door, and had resolved to draw our cartridges, we heard the well-known "*phe-oo ! phe-oo !*" and had guns up in a second, just as a flock dashed across a hedge, and swept along the field again. The contents of four barrels were on their line as fast as we could shift fingers inside the trigger-guards, and we had the satisfaction of seeing three birds dash themselves dead against the ground. We picked them up, and found them to be nice and plump, and in rare condition, as, indeed, they were bound to be from the strong dash of speed they showed.

"They're harder to kill now than in the harvest time," said Dan ; "but there's one good thing, there's more of them. We get a lot of them in August and September, when they come down from their breeding-grounds, and join company with the lapwings before setting out for the south. Their flight is slower then, and you can approach them easier, the younger birds, which have never seen or heard guns, letting you well up to between fifty and sixty yards for the first day or two without the aid of cover. After that you must make use of turf banks, dry ditches, or rising grounds to get within range of them. I'll show you to-morrow, however, how to manage them."

Taking the young farmer's advice that night, I filled a lot of shells with an ounce and a quarter of No. 7 shot, over three drachms, marked like all others

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while he sponged out an old Queen Bess, which had not been used for some time, saying it was good for sending a dose of shot amongst them, though it was "a little rough on the shoulders."

We were wakened by curlews calling next morning, for the

house was situated in the centre of a long range of meadows, which were rough with rushes, which in times of thaw were the favourite resort of the "whaup," as the bird is called in the north. Breakfast of the halesome parritch, some tea, and a dry Loch Fyne herring, or "Glasgow magistrate," over, we donned our shooting gear, and held out, Dan carrying two guns, his own D.B.L. and the Old Queen Bess. Two lads, whose usual occupation about the place was scarecrowing, but who were frozen out on account of the rooks being similarly situated, the soil being too hard to penetrate, came behind to assist in the stalking, as the young farmer called it, though the stalking was more like driving.

"We may as well take all we can get," he said. "So here, my boy, take hold of 'old mother,' and be sure you don't pull the trigger, for there's as much powder in her as would blow up the house, besides half a pound of shot."

The stripling, who had been used to firing off the gun when moderately charged with powder, in order to frighten the rooks, took hold of Old Queen Bess, and we held up through the middle of the rushes. Up sprang a jack-snipe with a squeak, and down he came to my right barrel. Just as I had marked the particular tuft where he fell, my companion gave me a shout to lie down, and, looking round, I saw he was lying flat on his face, while his eyes were cast in the direction of the fields to the left.

"What a lot of them ! Fill your left barrel, and keep ready," he cried.

"Ready for what ?" I asked, shoving, however, as requested, a fresh cartridge into the left chamber to replace the one whose contents had been too much for Jack Snipe.

"Plover ! Why, can't you see them ? Your gun has disturbed them, and they're circling about. Keep down, and they may come this way ; if not, they will shift off a couple of miles."

Looking upwards, I saw, sure enough, crowds of them circling round and round, now and then coming down close to the ground, only to rise away into the air fully a hundred feet.

"*Phe-oo ! Phe-oo !*" whistled out Dan with his left little finger in his mouth in answer to the note of a straggler, which seemed to be on the outlook for companions. I had my eyes almost

watering with watching the gyrations of the big crowd when from behind me came the sharp shout, "Look out! quick!"

Bending sharp to the left, on my knee, I found a flock crossing Dan, who was in the "ready" position, just giving them both barrels. Swerving wildly as I flung forward on them, my shot went through the empty air, and to my utter surprise my left barrel drew down nothing. Dan's gun, however, had been good for three, and I was just going to ask him how in the world I had missed them, when he let me know without my doing so.

"It's no use your trying to follow on golden-plover going at that speed: they are the fastest birds that fly in winter, driven grouse and driven partridges notwithstanding. You may not think so, but it's true. You've only got to see the way they dash themselves to pieces when they are killed to let you know that. See! look here! this one has knocked its head off."

Looking round, I saw that the bird he held up had almost knocked its head away from its body in consequence of the speed it had on when it came down; and though I was a little disappointed at the non-success of my two shots, I resolved to take the young fellow's warning, as he had killed more golden-plover with the gun than any other man in the west country. Picking up my snipe, we held forward again through the bushes, and succeeded in getting a brace of jack, there being a few springs in the marshiest bits of the meadows which rarely, if ever, froze up, and these were, of course, just little bits of paradise to Master John in such severe weather. By this time the plovers had settled out of sight in a field beyond a slight rising ground, and to approach them Dan counselled a stalk up the sides of a ditch, which he said would run very near to them if not within shot, while the lads should wait till they were signalled by a slight wave of his hat, high enough to be seen by one on the watch, but not by the birds. It was anything but nice work, crawling along the sloping banks of that ditch or cut, hats off and heads down, with guns carried at the trail; still we managed, though at times I was very nearly into the water, which was, according to my guide and companion, fully four feet deep. Nice treat it will be, thought I to myself, to get up to the neck in clear frosty weather, after a lot of plover, as if one were hunting about for duck. On we crawled and scrambled, Dan going

up to the edge and peering several times, apparently unsatisfactorily, as he would return again, and head down and cap in hand motion me forward. At length, after another look over the edge of the bank, where a small broom bush afforded some cover, he signalled me to come upwards cautiously. Slipping up gently, I raised my eyes over the edge and had the satisfaction of seeing a long wide flock of golden-plover, mixed with green plover or lapwings, and, "Confound it!" I heard Dan mutter, "three infernal curlews." "It's no for nocht the gled whistles," is an old Scotch proverb, and it is equally true that "it is no for nocht the whaup whistles," as he will jump up and let out a wild scream just as you have about concluded your stalk, and go away with his head turned first left, then right, over his wing, as much as to say, "Look out everybody, there is danger about." Still, plovers will sometimes not pay much more attention to the curlew than halt in their feeding, and put themselves more on the alert, so we were hopeful. The whole of them were, however, forty yards out of range, so what was to be done? Dan watched them, however, carefully for a moment or two, and then appeared to be satisfied.

"The birds are moving a little in towards us, so we'll have them if we are careful. We must bring the lads over the hill, though."

So saying he placed his hat in view, and we saw the two boys make their appearance on the rising ground. At once the curlews went off with a scream, but the golden-plovers only cocked their heads and gave out a slight mewling whistle, while the lapwings or peesweeps seemed to be pondering as to who and what the disturbers were. Accustomed to shepherds, who never harmed them when passing close, they, after a little watching, gave no heed, and commenced to hop about and examine the ground as before. After advancing a short distance, Dan gave two waves with his hat sideways, as if to his collies working sheep on the hillsides, and both closed in a little again. Two waves more of the hat to the right, and they commenced to walk to the right again, all this time, as I could see, moving closer. By this time the birds, apprehending some slight danger from that direction, and totally unconscious of our presence, *the real danger*, commenced to alter their course, more in the direction of the ditch. Seeing this Dan stuck his hat over the bank, and held it firm, a

signal which he told me was for the lads to sit down in the field where they were.

"Let's get forward," was his call to me ; "we'll have a rare try. I'm going to give them the muzzle-loader to begin with."

"The deuce you are!—then I'll keep wide of you," was my remark ; for I had seen him put three charges of powder into her and fully two handfuls of shot, for he was like the Esquimaux a whaling captain once told me of, who was of belief that success all lay in the loading—"plenty powder, plenty kill," regardless of all consequences.

Dan having gone twenty yards, showed the muzzles of both of his guns over the bank the double-barrelled muzzle-loader on the left for secondary use, and then motioned me to wait till he fired the big gun amongst them, sitting, or, rather on the rise, which is the best time. Breathless I waited and watched the birds, which now and then would run into little tempting groups, and as often break away into straggling order. A dozen of the front division had just fully congregated, when *Phe-oo!* from Dan was followed by a terrific bang from the Queen Bess, while the contents of my two barrels went though the second flight. I saw clearly enough that a lot of birds were down, but out of the side of my right eye I saw the young farmer disappear with a splash into the ditch, out of which I extricated him by seizing hold of the muzzle of the long gun, the cause of the misfortune.

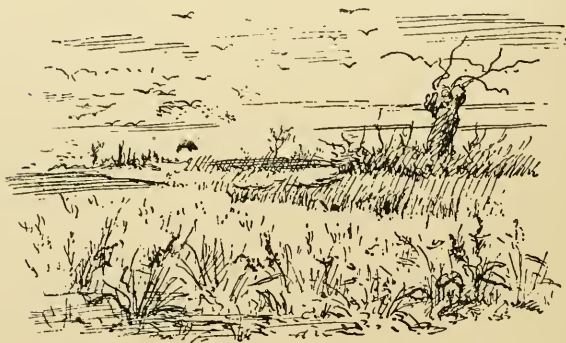
"That must have been strong poother, or I must have been sitting rather light on my knee," was all he said, shaking himself like an Irish water-spaniel new out of the water.

"I was afraid you had overdone it at the time I saw you loading," was my reply. "It takes a pretty strong man to make his shoulder a punt swivel for a duck-gun."

"I wouldn't a minded the knocking over, but to be kicked into the ditch by the auld jade was more than I bargained for ; however, let's see what we have got, and I will run home and change my clothes."

The two lads had by this time run down upon the scene, and commenced to pick up the killed and wounded. When all had been gathered together we found we had six brace and a half—a fair lot for one volley. Shoving them into the game bag,

Dan, who was by this time white with ice, seized his gun, leaving the *Queen Bess* in the hands of one of the lads, and bolted homewards. In an hour he returned, clad in a dry, warm rig, and we commenced fresh operations. About noon, however, the whole flock getting afraid, rose high in the air, and, after circling round several times over our heads well out of range, darted off for some fresh ground, and we did not see them for several days afterwards. When we counted the slain we found we had fifteen brace beside the three jack-snipe and a curlew, which dodged me only to fly over the deadly barrels of the young farmer's gun. Altogether, we had no reason to be dissatisfied with our off-day among the golden-plover.



HOW WE OPENED LOCH ARD.



HAVE a horror of the "inauguration" business, and never read of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales busy at work laying foundation-stones of churches, hospitals, and all that, without inwardly expressing my sympathy. Still there are some forms of it which are enjoyable. The opening day with hounds is always pleasant, though the sport is never the best of the season. Launching a ship is not disagreeable work (the printer can make a typographical error here if he likes), for launching and lunching are very much the same sort of thing, combining as they do all the good things of a Scotch funeral, barring the corpse ; but the best sport I ever had yet was at the "opening" of a loch. In Scotland I need not say that there is an opening day there for everything—the bowling-green is "opened," the football-ground is "opened," everything indeed that will open is "opened" for the sake of having some festivities. Every "canny" individual in Scotland is fond of a dram, but generally manages to preface it with the excuse of "Just to drink your health, sir," or "Just another one to drink the health of your coot wife, sir." Indeed, sometimes they will drink to their own healths, and it was, I think, the late Earl of Stair and Dalrymple who turned his double title to good advantage when alive. "Here's to you, Stair," he would say, following it up immediately afterwards with another glass and the remark, "Your health, Dalrymple."

But to my story ; some people will say that the proper word for opening a loch would be "decanted," but that is not what we did, as we took in very little water indeed. The letter of an old keeper explains what is meant.

" Loch Lomond, April.

"Deer Sir,—Noin u are font of throwin a flee, I rite to let u know that I am in good health, hoppin this will find u the sam. Thank God for all his mersis, we oppen Loch Ard on Wednesday next, when there will be some goot fishin. I wull meet you at Balloch at eleven on Tuesday.

Yours trooly,

" RORY MCTAGGART."

It was just the very thing I was anxiously waiting for, so I got down my rod, sought out my fly-book on Monday, and set out for Loch Lomond, accompanied by a genial friend, who was not much of a fisher, but could fill a pipe as well as he could smoke one. It is a grand thing to have a man in the boat who can load your pipe when trout are taking well and you are dying for a whiff or two. He could also sing a good song, and had no anti-teetotal notions about him. It was a cold, bleak spring morning, with a flake or two of snow dancing about in the atmosphere, and to have talked of going fishing would have been madness in the eyes of our fellow-travellers going northward to Glasgow. Still, the thought of whipping the clear water and the purring sound of the reel kept us cheery, and, come what come may, we resolved to meet old Rory at Balloch.

Next morning as we looked out of the window of the Queen's Hotel, at St. Mungo, at eight, there was a sprinkling of white on the grass of George-square, and we could feel that the atmosphere was cold. Ugh! the colder the better, we thought; it will be the better excuse for the passing of the flask. Clad in ulsters and mufflers, we got to Balloch about a quarter to eleven, and found Rory, faithful servant, waiting for us, his rod in one hand, and an enormous creel—quite as big as that of a New-haven fish-wife's—on his back. As the train moved off to the pier a snow shower began to fall, and so we hid our fishing rods, for it seemed rather stupid to be seen bent on a fishing excursion in such weather. I was glad to know that we were mistaken for an engineering party on the way to lay off some new branch line.

“And where and how is Lachy, Rory? Why did you not bring him with you?”

“Oh, iss it Lachy? Lachy will be ferra near to Aberfoyle by this time.”

“What, walking? Why did you not bring him with you?”

“Because he iss a young lad, Mister McToogal, and can walk. Do you think it would be wise for me to learn him to pay for railway trains at his time of life? No, no.”

Such extravagance, I thought to myself. Spend eighteen-pence in a railway train when one could cross the hill and walk the whole distance of 30 miles. Oh, that I had been brought up in this simple Highland style! At Bucklyvie a waggonette was

awaiting the train to drive us to the Bailie Nicol Jarvie Hotel, which is situated almost on the site of the famous Clachan Inn, where Francis Osbaldeston was taken into custody, and so well-known to play-goers from the hot-poker fight in "Rob Roy." Bucklyvie is not much of a place, and may best be described as a railway-station. We got inside, stowed away rods, baskets and portmanteaus, and went off like a newly-hooked bull trout on Loch Shin ; but we stopped instanter, as if the whole tackle was gone.

"Hilloa, driver! what's up?"

"Forgot the fish, sir."

"Fish, eh?"

"Yes, sir ; fish from Edinburgh, for your dinners to-morrow."

Whew ! the landlord had not much faith in the loch then, we thought. So we harked back to the station, stowed away the bag of fish, my facetious friend singing "Wha'll buy my caller herrin?" It was a pleasant drive down the Valley of the Forth, but, ugh ! it was cold, and we literally wished, as Bailie Nicol Jarvie did, that our boots had been fou' o' bilin' hot parritch when we set out on such a condemnable journey. We were soon at Aberfoyle, one of the prettiest little places, with one of the nicest little hotels in the Highlands, and after testing the whiskey, sallied out to look at the place so well described by Sir Walter Scott. The first thing that attracted our attention was the hot poker which the Bailie made such good use of, as it now hangs to a tree in front of the hotel door. That it is the original plough coulter we were assured, but notwithstanding we felt sceptical. Then we went to the Bridge, and my friend insisted on doing the capture scene in "Rob Roy," he doing the chief, and I acting the part of the unfortunate soldier who is flung over the parapet. I felt indisposed and withdrew from the piece after the first act, notwithstanding strong protestations. My friend was not, however, to be denied. A number of keepers, young and old, including Lachy, had arrived to assist us to open the famous loch, and so he set to work to organise a "Rob Roy" company, having taken a part in the piece once when played by a party of amateurs. The genial landlord, one of a noted hotel-keeping family, was only too glad to see the fun, and so we started the rehearsal after dinner. A party of three from Edinburgh had arrived to enjoy

the sport of next day, and one ventured to take the part of Major Galbraith, an old Lowland keeper, who had once seen the piece played, taking the part of the Bailie. I did the McStewart. We found a six-feet Highlander ready to do the Doogal Crater. My friend read till we came to the Clachan scene, which was to be done to the very thing, the poker having been disengaged from the tree for the actual fight. In came the Bailie and Francis in time, the former complaining that he has had nothing to eat but the rough tough leg of an old muir-cock, and insisted upon having something to eat. The Major by this had got drunk enough to play his part in real style, and had waited impatiently the arrival of the Glasgow magistrate. The first thing the latter did was to stick the end of the coulter right into the ribs of the glowing coal fire, never thinking for a moment but when he had seen it on the stage the poker was really red. The usual wrangling over the chair commenced. All the time was I nervous, for I saw the six feet seven Doogal creature lying underneath the table, on which was situated a large paraffin lamp, with glass globe and funnel, ready to spring at the proper time like a tiger-cat. At last came an awful scene. The Bailie threatened with the hot poker, the Major, who was very drunk, gave in only to commence afresh. The fight commenced, the old keeper using the blazing-hot poker with good purpose, while the Major yelled with pain. To complete the confusion, the Doogal jumped so furiously from under the table, that he upset it, paraffin lamp, globes, tumblers, whiskey, and all. The real fight could, indeed, have been nothing to it. We captured our Rob on the bridge next morning in a very bad condition. He was awfully bilious. A pint of champagne worked a speedy cure, and breakfast over we were soon whirling along the road which leads to the loch.

The place where the boats are drawn up on the beach is about three miles from the hotel, and is indeed a most romantic spot. The bank fringed with copsewood is said to be the veritable place where Bailie Nicol Jarvie was got hanging by the tail of his coat. Be this the case or not, it is just the place where we could imagine Helen saying, "My foot is on my native heath, and my name is MacGregor." Though the sun on the hills was against us for fishing, it only helped to make more charming the lovely scenery, Ben Lomond filling up the beautiful foreground.

There were two boats out in all, a trolling-rod and two fishers in each. Luck attended our craft, as we had a fish with the phantom ere we had crossed the loch, and so the flask came out accordingly to drink to the "first fush." Cooligartin Bay, a favourite spot, was kindly, and we took out three with the teal wing; while by the back of Duke Murdoch's Island we had a couple more. This little island derives its name from having been a place where a Scotch Duke of that name is said to have taken refuge. On the principal island there is a little lodge, with fireplace and table, and inside our full party lunched, a blazing fire of pine-twigs roaring in the chimney all the time.

We fished till four o'clock, when we found it no use, and crooning an old Scotch song our boatman pulled for the beach. We had not very heavy baskets, but they were fair trout, running mostly three to a pound. We were soon back at the Bailie Nicol Jarvie, where we did not again essay the drama, the Major shaking his head in an ominous manner in inquiring after the hot poker.

Next day we drove by the loch side past Loch Chon, another good trouting loch, and Loch Arklet, now private fishing, which we were sorry to hear, as the trout are said to be splendid. Wheeling to the left just as Loch Katrine came into view, we were soon whirling down the winding road to Inversnaid Hotel, where we resolved to stay and try a day or two on the Queen of Scottish lakes, Loch Lomond.



“KILLED BY A BOOK.”



EEN as is the eye of the gamekeeper, there are parts of the gorse it cannot penetrate ; and sharp though the knife of the forester be, there are numerous little thickets in every woodland which grow up tangled, unpruned, and unguided. So it is with the world generally. No man knows less of the great globe than he who sails all round it.

There are little corners of Wales, little dales of Devonshire, and little islands in the West of Scotland, worlds in themselves, which prove sufficient for the travel of the intelligent student of character, one who finds a parish too big to be explored in a lifetime, let alone complaining of the narrowness of the globe.

One of these little island worlds is Kerra's Isle, in the Western Hebrides. It is not down under that name in the Admiralty chart ; but wandering artists in search of little bits of surf-beaten beach, stray anglers, and some Viking-like yachtsmen, may recognise the place without even “taking soundings.” The hardy men of Kerra could scarcely be called Celts, as their dialect was more Norse than Gaelic. They spoke little English, but what little they did speak was good—“ferra coot” they would say themselves ; and it was “very good.”

One summer evening, as the dying sun was casting its red glow over the bosom of the Atlantic, the people of the little rugged village of the stone huts of B—— were gathered on the edge of the gravel beach in the little bay, which, almost land-locked, afforded protection in stormy weather to the fishing-boats. They were watching a bark that, tack and tack, against the fresh head-breeze, was slowly nearing the land.

“I think, Norman,” said one, “with the sun-down breeze a little free, he should fetch the bay now. He has eased off his sheets, and I can see he is lying more end on.”

“I wish he would get a slant,” said the old man named Norman, with a sigh. “He must know something about a horse. He is a coot judge of a horse.”

"Yes, he has seen more than five horses, besides pownies," said another ; "and he will be able to tell what to give him."

"Oh," groaned another, "but it will be a sore day for us if the horse dies !"

Old Norman's horse was an institution connected with the Island ; it was, indeed, the only horse in Kerra. More than fifteen years previous to the time of our story, Norman and three others brought it from the mainland in the big boat. And what a curiosity it was ! At the time it stood on the shore an awkward yet sprightly colt. The hippopotamus in the Zoological Gardens did not attract more attention when first brought to this country than the colt of Norman from the mainland. But it was ill, and people were afraid they were going to lose him.

"And what will we do at funerals," said one ; "will we have to carry the corpse on the long dark road ?"

"Or at marriages," said another, whose ideas were less gloomy ; "and if the Laird should come this year at the 12th of August to shoot the grouse, what will we do with his boxes and his guns ?"

Indeed, the minds of the people were seriously exercised with the difficulties which presented themselves at the death of old Donald, as he was called. As the folks of Kerra scarcely ever had sickness amongst them—death generally coming amongst the men with a squall at sea—the women of the place generally living till far beyond the threescore and ten—it was natural that they should not know much about veterinary science. According to the complaint, the medicine prescribed was lukewarm salt water or hot whiskey ; while a bowl of tea (for they had found out "the cup that cheers") was a frequent cause of recovery, more especially when the patients were old women. All of these prescriptions had been tried.

It was a bad case of colic, and the old horse, who had done quite enough of work for his years, was breathing short and thick, as, pained and exhausted, he lay with glazed eye in the rudely constructed stable, the timbers of which, all out of some wrecked barque, made one fancy himself at sea in the roughly polished fore-castle of a North American timber trader.

Soon the bow of Malcolm's boat grated on the gravel shore, and the stout fisherman sprang on to the beach.

"Did he know what to give to Donald? for the poor beast was dying."

But Malcolm confessed that he knew little about how to repair a horse. He could mend a net with any man, or blacken a bladder for a buoy, and if his cobble was strained and leaking he would turn her over on her back and give her a good coat of boiling tar.

"But a horse, no. He had seen more than six horses besides pownies in his day, but he could not say how they were to be made better when they were ill."

"But what have you done to the poor beast, Norman?" said the big fisherman, anxiously.

"We gave him some warm water from the sea," said the old man; "but it did him no coot, no coot whateffer."

"And did you try him with some warm oil?" said Malcolm again.

"Yes, we tried him with some nice warm seal oil," said the old man again, despondingly; "but it was no coot."

"And what else did you do for him?"

"We took the fill of the baling-dish twice of blood out of him," said Norman, with a sigh: "but it was no coot; and then we gave him a coot bottle of whiskey, mixed Long John and Islay, but it is no coot either, and the old horse will die."

"But was there no medicine left by the minister the last time he was here," said Malcolm again; "and was there not a book that the Laird left, which was to help them when the cows were ill?"

"Yes, there was in his own house——"

With a rush the fishermen made for Malcolm's cot, and sure enough there was the book and the medicines. It required the best scholar amongst them to make out from the symptoms what was wrong with Donald, but the case seemed clear enough to be one of colic. The medicines were of the simplest kind, but they had no dram-glasses, and with the quickly-emptied pipe-bowl of Norman's pipe they measured out about an ounce and a half of laudanum and three or four ounces of spirits of turpentine, while another filled out a small jugful of linseed oil. With this mixed up in a bottle, they were soon at Donald's side, and, propping him up with his head in the air, Big Malcolm poured the contents over his throat.

Too late ! alas, too late ! The horse gave one expiring groan and dropped dead at their feet.

Next day they hauled him out on to the beach, and lowered him as tenderly as they would one of their own brethren into his grave. And when they had lowered him, old Norman brought out the book and placed it on his head, while Malcolm emptied, one by one, the bottles containing the medicines.

"He could not have died of the salt water," said one.

"And he could not have died of the tea," said another.

"And the whiskey would have made him petter," said a third.

"Yes, it must have been *what we gave him out of the book*," said Norman. "I never knew no good come out of books."

And there on that stormy beach the leading men of the little island gathered together in conclave, and resolved that all books were dangerous and should be destroyed. Their forefathers had done without books, and why should not they, who made their living in the same perilous manner, also be able to dispense with them ? If they contained good advice they also contained advice which was misleading, so they thought it would be wise to bury them together in one grave. Mrs. Partington like, they were going to stem the great wave of civilisation on their own little bleak island home. So, as the Fiery Cross was carried through the Highland glens in old days, the word passed from hut to hut that everything that was in the shape of print should be taken to the beach and examined. There were not many books in the little place, as there were few who could read English ; but, one by one, they were brought to the lonely shore, and the massacre of the innocents commenced. Volume after volume was looked into by Malcolm and his associates, who reverently and carefully laid aside those in which the Deity was mentioned. Old copies of "Blackwood," left by wandering tourists, were condemned without a dissenting voice ; Hugh Miller, on the "Old Red Sandstone," casually left in the bottom of a boat by an adventurous geologist, was passed with many a crooning wail and shake of the head ; while "Chamber's Information for the People" was "dangerous, ferra dangerous," and condemned at one glance.

And when they had covered the poor old worn-out animal, physicked and bled to death through their own ignorance, they

emptied the shingle into the grave, and covered up all the knowledge which in a casual way—as the wild seed of the mountain flowers are taken from place to place by their adhering to the wings of the ever busy bee—had come to Kerra.

And if any stranger northwards next week after the grouse, or the fine silver-skinned trout which swim the lochs of Kerra-should, as he examines the stone on the beach with the epitaph

“HERE LIES NORMAN MORRISON’S HORSE,”
ask any of the natives what the old horse died of, they will tell you

“HE WAS KILLED BY A BOOK.”



BAGGING A HUSBAND.

A ROMANCE OF THE TWELFTH OF AUGUST.

TWELFTH! Another of Time's milestones past. Can it really be a full twelve months since I sat with that merry party in the smoking-room of the little lodge at Rowantrec, on Loch Lomond, at the close of a hard day's walking after grouse on the hillside? Alas! it must be so, we think, as we scratch our bald head and stroke our grizzled moustache; we are not travelling so fast as we used to do, but the milestones keep turning up with the number of miles we have done—and without the slightest indication of the number we have got to go; the old horse of life is not so fresh as he was when he started from the last half-way house. Ah, well, the Twelfth, the glorious Twelfth, brings its recollections of purple heather flanked in the far distance by ripening yellow cornfields, of trailing mountain mists, purring waterfalls, whirring coveys, the near bang of the guns at hand, and faint, distant crack of guns over the hill. Happy indeed may all be who are out on the hillside enjoying the cool mountain air. May they have good sport, dine well off mountain mutton, and enjoy as happy an evening as the writer did hearkening to the ever-fresh story of "Bagging a Husband." As a rule the story is started by the stranger of the company, and this night a year ago it was the stranger of our party who started it, and in the following way it was told:

"Wonder what sort of a bag old MacLaverock had on the other side of the loch; he was *pot-potting* away all day, and if he's as good with the gun as he is with the rod he won't miss much. By Jove; what a basket of fish he can make at times! Why, yesterday when I could not raise a trout he was drawing them in as hard as he could. And, I say, how nicely that charming young wife of his can handle the oars, just a stroke now and then and an easy drift down to the shore. I don't believe there's a professional boatman on the loch side knows how to do it better."

"Yes, there's something in the way she handles her oars, let alone the easy way she drifts down. The old laird could tell you that himself if he cared," said one.

"How in the world did he get hold of her? He seems to be about the last man one would think of taking a wife, and here he is with one who could quite readily be his daughter, who pulls his boat about the loch when he is fishing, and I'll almost swear she works the dogs when he's shooting, for I was watching them with the glass to-day," said our novice.

"Just so; that accounts for your light day's sport," chimed in the wag of our party. "You would better send another certificate to the maker of your binocular, 'Will show bullet marks on a target at a thousand yards, tell the time on the nearest church clock, or detect the fluttering of a lady's dress on a moor five miles off.' You just let the MacLaverockess alone. She's rather a rasper if all is true, and an old retired Edinburgh lawyer as he is, would perhaps like a good fat co-respondent like you. Keep the loch between yourself and them, my boy."

"Humph!" said the young one, who, though fond of sport, had still to get quit of some youthful spirits, and did not care to discuss such dry subjects as the cause of grouse disease, affairs in the East, or sit silently over a hand at whist; "I think if I go in for matrimony I'll not likely begin with another man's wife, fashionable as it seems to be nowadays. What I want to know is, How did such a queer old canny-faced Scotchman—whose grey eyes always seem to be saying, 'Did you see a saxpence?'—get hold of her?"

"How did she get hold of *him*," you mean, said another, grudging apparently the loss of his pipe during the moment of utterance.

"With her oars, of course."

"Drifted right down on the top of him," said a third, "and put the landing net under him before he knew where he was."

"But I say, Macfarlane here knows all about it; tell us, Mac, old boy, how she gave him the gaff. It was rather a funny business, I know."

Macfarlane, who was the head of our bachelor party of four guns, and the individual who had examined the moor, signed the lease, and in general made himself useful—there should always be an experienced foreman over a bachelor grouse party—laid

down his pipe, and partly by way of changing the metaphor and partly by way of explanation, said,

"Weel, weel! I don't mind telling ye the story, lads, though ye mun ken I was varra near being bagged mysel, but that's nae matter."

"Fancy! *Mac* married, with his wife working the dogs for him on the hill-side!" shouted our stranger again.

"Never mind that, lad; it's mair pleasant than the man nursing the bairns, and the wife working the dogs; and I have seen such things come aboot through watchin' the lasses five miles off through a binocular, as you seem to have been dacin' a' day. But never mind.

* * * * *

"Ye see, gentlemen, before grouse shooting got very fashionable, and lads like yourselves come down from London with mair siller in their purses than sport in their hearts, moors were verra moderately rented. Ye, maybe, had na got sic verra fine lodges as you have nowadays, but had to sleep in some shepherd's hut or some farmhouse, a shakedown in the barn at times, or a berth beside the coo in the byre. But there was aye lots of sport. Weel, this verra place was called Haggishaw then, and a rough place it was, but when the laird thought he would build a lodge on it of course he must give it a grand name to help it to let. Well, just a year or two before the lodge was built, Dugald's Well over the loch came into the market in Edinburgh fashion, that is, it was advertised for sale, apply to Duncan MacLaverock, W.S., Edinburgh,—and in true Edinburgh fashion Duncan MacLaverock got possession of the place himself, and in time named it Laverock Hall. Having been put out of this place, which I had shot over for many a year before, I managed to lease the shooting on three of the next big sheepfarms, and took up my quarters at the hotel two or three days before the Twelfth, and was having capital sport, when an old gentleman arrived one night by the coach with the bonniest lassie I had ever seen in my life. She was the niece of the old gentleman, who was Colonel Grogan, a retired officer, and the gentleman who had taken the lodge here, then very cheap compared with what it is now. The explanation that I was the former lessee was a sufficient introduction, and in the course of the evening I was introduced to Norah, 'me

darlint naace, the only daughter ov me poor ould brother Pat. I think I hear his rich brogue and her laughing voice yet. Well, I shot with them on the Twelfth, and I fished with them, and the Colonel had days with me. And as to me, I could neither shoot, fish, nor sleep. Something came over me. Duncan, the keeper, said I must have been glowerin' at a water-wraith." There was a loud laugh here, but the speaker lifted his pipe and resumed: "However, I'll no say what would have come aff, but the Cornel borrowed five pounds from me, and then I began to see the lass had not anything but her looks, and I held aff."

"Oh, you skinflint, Scotty!" came the call through the room.

"Weel, weel, richt or wrang, men, but I held aff, and nothing was said till old MacLaverock, who was fishing one day, came across the loch to have a cast here on the shore with the westerly winds, and he was whipping away round the point at the bramble-bushes there, when somewhat carelessly, or through short-sightedness, he cast too far, and got entangled in the bushes.

"Weel, he was wriggling, and twisting and backing water with the oars when the sweetest vision ever he had seen in his life, attired in white muslin, said, 'Oh, pray allow me, sir!' and jumped out from the bushes to relieve the casting-line—that is, if you believe that feminine nature is, real, genuine and honest, which I *don't*. Well, she undid the line, and made to cast it into the water, when—phew!—the whole casting-line was round her lovely figure, and every hook sunk up to the hackles in the muslin dress. MacLaverock had never been heard to swear, except once before, and that was when he was fined for street-preaching in his native town, but I think he must have relieved himself with a bit aith at that time."

"By Jove!" said the stranger, "I would have given a hundred pounds to have been in his place."

"No enough, lad, to get oot o't, if you'll wait to hear me finish. So nothing could be done, MacLaverock saw, but back the boat ashore and assist the lady to undo the hooks, two of which were caught in the bosom of her dress and one in the very skirt. It was a ticklish job, but the old fellow tackled to it, and with his left arm round her waist was busily engaged working out his 'bob' fly, a teal wing, when who should come upon the scene but the Colonel and his keeper. The lady gave the usual



"Who should
come upon the scene
but the Colonel and his
Keeper"

slight scream, and the Colonel gave the usual oath, and the game-keeper said, 'Guid preserve us,' all arranged I have nae doot, and as I could have fetched out in cross-examination. MacLaverock explained as well as he could, there was a good hearty laugh over it, the flies were cut off from the gut, to be unfastened by the lively Norah at leisure; and after partaking of the Colonel's hospitality, The MacLaverock returned home.

"Weel, gentlemen, as the night's getting late, and as we have got a lot of grouse to kill the morn', I may explain, to make a long story short, that Miss Norah not having sent the flies, the old skinflint MacLaverock wrote her 'for the lovely teal wing that was fastened to her breast,' and got it back with a very affectionate letter, and then there were one or two more meetings, and one or two more letters, and then just as the season was finishing a visit from the Colonel, who demanded 'your intentions, Sorr, to my naace, the only daughter of my poor brother Pat.' MacLaverock was rather staggered, but suggested a little quietness in the meantime till they talked the matter over; 'and we can take it to avizandum. You know.'

"'You may take her to any place you like, Mither MacLaverock; but, if you do, it will be as your wife, or, be the powers, you'll pay for it.'

"It was a bad job, so MacLaverock went through to Edinburgh and consulted his fellow-partner. 'You've got a bad case,' said the latter; 'that scene with the fishing hooks, and that letter about the teal wing in her breast is bad—jurymen are not all anglers, and I am inclined to think would go against you Better, I think, marry the girl if you like her now that you've retired. She will help to relieve the loneliness of Laverock Hall.' And marry her he did, and a good wife she's proved; though her previous career proves her to have been a puller and inclined to run away."

"And the Colonel?" asked our young stranger.

"Oh, Colonel be hanged; he never was a Colonel; he was merely a husband-and-wife monger, who never had a brother or sister, but went about hawking pretty girls about the Highlands as his nieces. If they secured a husband they never forgot him; if they did not, then they went halves over the breach-of-promise or compromise damages."

"Was this Colonel Grogan a tall thin fellow, bald-headed,

with a grizzled moustache and always inclined to talk about days at the Curragh ?” said the stranger, timidly.

“The same,” said MacFarlane.

“Had he not another niece, tall and straight, with the loveliest black eyes ?”

“My boy, I tell you he was never without a pretty niece on his hands for market purposes—but what’s the matter with you ?”

“Matter enough, and the deuce take grouse moors, Irish colonels, and Scottish county balls,” he shouted, pulling a ring off his finger. “I danced with her all night at Stirling, and met this infernal old uncle, who was always talking of days at the Curragh !”

“And made up, I suppose, to his Uncle Pat’s only niece,” said MacFarlane, coolly. “Aweel, aweel, may-be she’ll make as guid a wife as the ane ye were looking at a’ day through the glass ; if no, ye’ll——”

“See him and his black-eyed niece to the bottom of the loch first. What time does the coach start in the morning ? I’m off to London. If I stay, this old impostor will bag his bachelor like a blackcock-on a cornstook !”—and there was a gun less at Rowantree all last season.



WELL WON, BUT THE WRONG WAY:

OR,

HOW I WAS LAUGHED OFF THE COURSE.

“ND so you are up for the Cattle Show, eh? Got some Southdowns, like myself, I suppose? Well, who would have thought it, after all these years? Let me see—ten, fifteen, twenty—ay, hang me if it is not twenty years since you and I were in the saddle together—twenty years! and here we are, like a couple of old Southdown wethers, sitting in the smoking-room of the Tavistock Hotel, as anxious to get hold of a red ticket from a Show Committee as we were once to get the heads of our horses in front at Aintree and Croydon.”

The speaker was John Woolbrain, well known to all members of the Smithfield Club to be one of the most successful exhibitors of Hampshire Down sheep at Islington, and in days gone past as one of the ablest men across a country or between the flags that ever set his hands down to the starter's signal; and his companion was a fellow-exhibitor, whom he had ridden against in years gone past in many an exciting contest.

“Yes, Jack Woolbrain,” said the other, “we were a fair good couple both of us, but you were always rather the better over a country. How was it, however, that you gave it up all of a heap? We used to wonder at that, for you were just in your prime at the time.”

“How did you give it up yourself?” was the reply.

“Ah!” was the response. “I was carried home on a hurdle with my thigh-bone broken, and I thought that it was about time to give it up. As to you, you dried up from a huff or something of that sort I have heard.”

“Who told you that?”

“I can't just remember exactly, but I know I was told *that*. A man can't, you know, tell everything that happened twenty years ago.”

“And a good thing too, James Rapcake, that folks forget it—good thing, at least, for my peace o' mind. It was a rascally

piece of business, it was, from first to last, I can tell you, and no huff at all about it."

"Then, as the night's young, let's hear it—it does make me feel lively to be alongside of a man I've worn the silk against on many a nice Spring-day, when we were as fresh as the grass that was springing in the hedgerows, or the larks singing overhead. Eh, man! we can ne'er have such things again! Just cattle shows and fairs, and such cold, serious work; none of the old fire we used to have, when the eyes were clear, the head was light, and the heart was eager to be off and over everything. Nay, John Woolbrain, there's nowt left for us but bargain-driving and canny rides home."

"Nowt! James, nowt! They were good old days they were. When you talk like that you almost make me feel the saddle under me, but there's no use crying back, though they were the happiest days of my life, those riding days. Then I didn't care who or what I was alongside of, and felt a stranger in no country as long as I had something good under me. Ay, indeed, those were the days.

THE DAYS WE RODE THE FLAGS BETWEEN, O'ER GRASSLAND AND O'ER PLOUGH.

Come listen, lads, unto my song while you your glasses sip,
And show me the old cap again, the jacket, and the whip;
And I will tell to you, my lads, of days when I was young,
When many a time my view-halloo loud through the woodlands rung.
Of where we met, and how we found, and when we ran to view,
And how we cast again and hit, and how we killed him too;
But I'll say nay if you'll but stay, far better to tell now,
The way we rode between the flags, o'er grassland and o'er plough.

There was Jack from York and Ainsty, there was Bill, too, from the
Quorn,

As good as e'er cried, Tally ho! or ever blew a horn;
And Will from Warwick, he was there, and White Horse Hal' and all,
And Belvoir Bob, and Yarborough Sam, as game as e'er topped wall
There ne'er was such a pounding lot: I'd travel miles to see
Just such a rare game lot again—but, lads, it cannot be!
There cannot be such men again, you haven't got 'em now,
As good as they who rode that day o'er grassland and o'er plough.

There were fifteen of us good and true determined for to win,
With game good hearts in every breast just beating to begin.
No gorse-topped fences, circus-jumps, but just a country course :
Your courses now just suit a cow, they never test a horse.
Our hedges, they were well grown then, our ditches deep and wide,
And sometimes there were stout oak rails to fly on either side,
The flag we faced, then down it went, the starter he said " Now ! "
And away we went between the flags o'er grassland and o'er plough.

The fields were long, the fences strong, the pace it was not slow,
Though some did fall, amongst them all did none refuse to go ;
We ditches flew, crushed hedges through, the rails were topped in style,
And then we settled on the grass to do the last home-mile.
In voices loud, the eager crowd, they raised a maddening roar :
You should have heard the noise it was—like waves upon the shore.
" Won by a neck," the judge did say—you must not ask me how,
But ask the men that rode that day o'er grassland and o'er plough."

As Jack Woolbrain sung the last verse he raised his voice, and the men in the smoking-room of the Tavistock who had just come in from Evans's next door, gave him a ringing cheer, finishing up with shouts of " Hoicks ! " and " Well done old boy ! " to which he responded by raising his glass and making the remark: " We're all Jack Goodfellow's children at hunting, no matter what country we belong to." " Yes," said his companion, " but your song hasn't let me know how you left off riding and turned to soft-woolled sheep, like myself."

" Ah, well, it's a long story ; but listen, and I'll make it as short as I can. You knew old Major Jones, didn't you ? "

" I did," was the response, " and a bigger sharp never was on the British turf or under it—where I hope he is living yet ! "

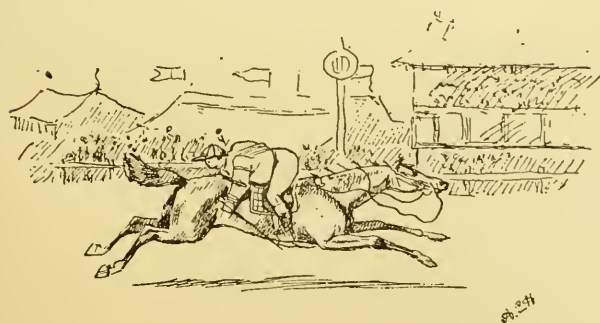
" I believe," was the response, " I'll prove him to be what you say, every inch, if you'll only hearken. I needn't ask you if you know the course at Batterick—I mean the flat racecourse—for you've ridden over it. Well, you know, it's two miles round, or rather more, with the winning-post on what you might call the tapping-part of the egg. Well, my old landlord he asked me to be so good as go up there for him and ride a mare of his in a Welter handicap, and of course I couldn't refuse. Well, up I went overnight by train, for I had to be in Lincoln market all day before ; and, what with trains being late and me a bit con-

fused driving out to the course, my head was, maybe, not just what it should have been. However, I got into the paddock just as they were ringing the first bell, and there was my landlord's brother, a tall Army chap, waiting for me, with honest Jack Lawson, the trainer, and both fuming and fretting because I had not been forward in time. Ye see I had bred the mare myself, ridden her too, and knew her ways better than anybody. However, I got dressed and weighed out somehow. It was the first race on the card. Well, the landlord's brother backed the mare, and of course the public followed, and I put down the price of a score o' rams myself; but for all that Major Jones kept on backing a big, upstanding, strange bay horse, which was ridden by that notorious scamp Sam Jamestown—he's warned off now, and a good job too! There was a third in the race, which wasn't backed, it was said to belong to Major Jones's gang too, so that there really after all was to be a match and no match either, mind you, for it was a hundred to one on the mare. Well, we saddled and got out and cantered past, and then I followed Jamestown up the course, which was all strange to me. As I did, I heard Major Jones say, 'He's an old cove,' meaning me, 'and if you do what I say you will win in a walk.' 'Hilloah,' say I to myself, 'I see your game. Your other horse is to get off in front, and keep bustling and bothering me all the road, but I'll jump off as soon as the flag is down, and you'll never see me again, that you won't.' Well, I followed the two right round to the starter, when Sam wheeled sharp about, looking like business, the flag went down, and away I went with something thundering hard behind me, but what it was I never looked over my shoulder to see. On I went, and passed the winning-post an easy winner, for when I finished there was nothing near me. Well, I walked back to get my congratulations and weigh in, when my landlord's brother and Jim Lawson started swearing at me awful. 'Why! haven't I won?' said I. 'Won! you infernal old fool!' said Jim, 'you've sold us completely!' 'How?' says I, firing up. 'How!' says he, 'you've ridden the course the wrong way round, you ass! Get back to the post as fast as you can.' Well, back to the post I cantered, and there was Sam and the other fellow grinning like mad. The flag was lowered and away we galloped on the right side of the course, that is exactly the opposite way you see I had just done, but



"Back to the post-scanderd"

the mare was of no use, and Sam's mount won easy. I could see the whole game afterwards. Sam walked the wrong way up the course on purpose, and the starter, like the rider of the other horse, who had raced for a bit behind me, must have been in the game. As to me, I was chaffed unmercifully, and to this day my landlord believes I was drunk, whereas I had never touched a drop. I never rode again and you now know how I never will; but, if ever you have anything in a race, see that your jockey knows the course, or he may win like me, the wrong way round.



WITH THE LONG-LINE FISHERS ON THE EAST COAST.

“T was a bad day for us when these rib-rippers were invented, I tell ye,” hissed a hardy East-Coast fisherman through his teeth, as he stood on the stone pier of the little fishing village of Newhaven, on the Forth, and watched some South Shields men carrying ashore from a steam trawler boxes filled with fish of all varieties and sizes. “What it is to come to I dinna ken, but I suppose we’ll have to emigrate and try the banks of Newfoundland for cod,” he continued, his eyes flashing with indignation as he spoke.

“They seem to get lots of fish, however,” was my interruption, wishing to get him to join in a friendly conversation on a subject which I knew was getting every day more interesting.

“And bonnie fish, I should say,” glancing with contempt at some which were placed under our eye by one of the trawler’s crew—a stalwart fellow, clad in a jersey, with white, or rather yellowish coloured, woven knickers and long sea-boots. “Look at the backs of them, all harled and cut ; indeed, man, it’s a pity to see them—not like the good clean cod we lift off the hook, but all choked in the purse o’ the net, and then dragged along the bottom for miles, their gasping mooths filled wi’ muck. I wonder what the public would say if they only kenned hoo their fish are grippit noo?”

Knowing that he was only uttering the opinions of hundreds who followed his precarious calling, I thought I would try to lead him into conversation on a subject which was every day becoming more interesting, and found little difficulty in doing so. You have only, indeed, to ask the “line” men their ideas about beam trawling and you have a crowd round you at once, each expressing his opinions in very much the same strain as those of my new acquaintance. It is needless to state that much of what they say is irrelevant. They will talk about the bottom of the

sea as if they had lived all their days there, and not lived by dropping their lines from the top of it. They commence their expressions invariably with the remark, "It stan's to reason, sir, that a fish will," and then go on to liken the habits of fish to human beings, and finishing by asking you if, "under the same circumstances, you wouldn't do the same yourself." Scripture is even quoted against the new method, and one is often reminded of the invocations to the Deity when the Cheviot breed of sheep were introduced into Scotland, and according to Hogg, "Auld Wattie Brydon was wont to pray every night for two years running to be protected and defended from a' new-comers, however, *white* washed their faces might be, for they were but like whited walls and painted sepulchres, full of rottenness within." Politics are also dragged into the argument, and with ideas that the steam trawlers belong to members of the aristocracy, the expression, "But what can a puir fisher do against the Hoose o' Lords?" is not infrequently heard. Though they have a considerable amount of respect for the Fishery Board, so far as the herring fishing is concerned, they do not seem to value its services at all in regard to deep-sea fishing for haddock, cod, or halibut; and there is every reason to believe that not so much attention has been paid to this branch of our fishing industries as it deserves. Fishery Commissions do not seem to be so successful as they should, as there appears to be a pierhead flavour about the evidence tendered. The men who are always ready to communicate their ideas are those who prefer the shore to the sea, and the opinions given are drawn more from their imagination than from their practical experience; indeed, you continually meet with one of this class, who begins, as a rule, with such remarks as, "Says I to Mr. Buckland, says I," and then gives a long account of a conversation, which, if it really ever did take place, must have highly amused the well-known naturalist.

My new acquaintance was a man of a totally different description—a hardy, healthy, practical fellow from a little port on the other side of the firth, who had been forced to run into New-haven owing to the impossibility of making any other harbour in safety from the heavy weather which prevailed outside. He did not seem to have a high opinion of the men of the Lothian side of the Forth, who he ventured to observe, after the coast

was clear, "would never gang far to sea as lang as their wives would take the creels on their backs."

"You don't seem to approve of the fish-hawking system in vogue here, then?" was my reply.

"A fisher's place is in his boat at his wark, and a fisher's wife's place is at her ain fireside; but that's no matter o' mine—they don't seem to mak muckle o't, however."

As he was turning on his heel in order to walk over to his little craft, which lay close to the harbour wall, her halliard block rattling against the mast-head, while every now and then a slight sea caused a commotion amongst the fleet, and a creaking of their sides against the rough-hewn wooden fenders, I hinted that the wind was a little chilly, and that (motioning with my left hand in the direction of the well-known tavern at the head of the pier) a small drop would not be far wrong. "I don't mind," was his reply, and we adjourned. His reserve relaxed a little by the malt, and he let loose his opinions on trawlers and trawling in a manner which was more than forcible. A Government inquiry into the question did not seem to meet with his approval. "Government's faur too busy wi' the salmon," he said—"with the 'lordly salmon,'" he repeated with sarcasm, as he rammed home the tobacco into his newly-filled pipe. "It gies guid sport to the Hoose o' Lords, I suppose, and of course that's something to be considered; salmon and trout come in for their full attention, and the fish o' the puir folk are never thocht o'." Wishing to change the subject, as I saw he was drifting a little into what might be called fishermen's radicalism, not that he was wrong about the amount of attention given to the salmon as against the deep-sea fishing interests, I made some remarks about boats, hinting that the shape and rig might be improved in order to make them more safe, and that the Edinburgh Fishery Exhibition Committee had been offering prizes for the boats best adapted for East Coast fishing.

"I was at the show," he said. "We were driven into Leith that week, and saw the models; but it's all very weel making a boat that's *safer*, but a boat that'll be *moderately safe* and do the wark is what we want. If you build them deep, then with half o' the harbours getting stilted up like Newhaven here, how are ye to get in when the tide's low? A bonnie thing it would be to be stuck at the bar-mouth and the market going on, and

seeing boats drawing six or eight inches less water dancing awa by ye, and them laughing at your new wherry—no, no. If any man wishes to design a new boat for oor business he must come a wee bit faurer oot than the pierhead ; he must come oot and see us shooting our line and see us hauling it, and then he'll know the reason why we like the boats we have ; but it's time I was gaun ower to see about sailing. Gin ye care to come ye're welcome, only mind ye'll have rough, wet, cauld wark, and it'll be three days or mair gin ye're hame again. Oors is no a wark that there's much pleasure in. If ye think o' coming ye'll not do faur wrang to put on twa or three suits o' clothes on ye. I can gie ye some oilskins and a jersey, and if ye have a pair o' lang boots ye'll do."

Being only too glad of the opportunity of seeing the toilers of the deep at work, I lost no time in making preparations, and was soon made secure against the penetrating north wind by two suits of heavy tweeds and a pilot jacket, my legs to the knees being encased by a pair of heavy sailor's tops. A small portmanteau carried another spare suit, a good supply of the cratur, a pound of tobacco, a lot of clay pipes with the stems broken short off, and some hard-boiled eggs, for I was a little afraid of getting sick of fish diet. With this in my hand I stepped briskly down to the pier, and seizing the proffered hand of the skipper swung myself on board and went below. There is little head-room in an East-Coast boat, owing to the small draught of water, but still one cannot say that they are uncomfortable. The yachting Sybarite, who loves to let go his mud-hook in Cowes Bay, might miss his blue velvet cushions and his swing table, but these are the luxuries of a sailing life. The little stove which stood in the middle of the cabin floor, though cold within and rusty without, betokened cheer at times and a warm cup of tea, and that was something at least to feel happy about. Seizing my portmanteau, the youngest of the boat's crew made it fast under a wooden board or seat on the port side, and I was booked for the voyage as safe as an American emigrant outside of Queenstown. A short visit to the little village again for a look at the little weather-glass in the tower at the cross, a parting glass at the old place, and we were ready to follow the boat alongside which our craft had been moored, and which was now under her brown lug and mizzen,

making a straight road down past the north side of Inchkeith. In a few minutes after leaving the harbour for the ground we were laying over to the cold north wind which came sweeping down from the Ochil hills till the lee gunwale was churning up the foam like a rugged rock in the centre of a mill race. Winter weather is not the best for pleasure sailing, more particularly on the edge of the North Sea, but there are views of the land we can get when the sky is leaden and the hills are white which the yachtsman cannot realise in summer, as his craft fills her white wings to the light airs which raise catspaws on the water. Yet, however picturesque Dun Edin and Arthur's Seat may look against the background of the Pentland Hills, the weather-side of a brown-sailed Scottish fishing-smack is not the most comfortable place in the world to view them from, and we were fain to go down below, while a stout-built lad of 21 took hold of the tiller and looked out with a keen eye for the best channel he could steer through between the storm-steadied craft in Leith Roads. A little whiskey and water is a sure passport to a Scotchman's heart—indeed, it will take the gag out of the mouth of the most uncommunicative of all men—an Aberdonian; and with a little of that "blue clout," as it is termed in the northern capital, my fishing friend felt warm enough to enter upon a discussion upon the rights of fishermen, and Scottish fishermen in particular.

"We have not the slightest objection to the Englishmen coming up here," was his reply, "but they maun come to *fish* not to *destroy*. We go to Ireland ourselves, or round to the Clyde, or the Isle of Man, but nobody finds fault, because we use nets as they should be used, and hooks as they should be used, but the trawlers come here and scrape the whole bottom of the sea in the same style as you would a garden-walk with a rake. Fish get frightened out into deeper water; but not only that, their food is destroyed, for it's my opinion that things below the water are very much like things on shore, and seek their living from plant to plant, as bees do theirs from flower to flower. Destroy these plants by the heavy beam trawl dragging along the bottom, and your fish maun shift their feeding ground. Besides, too, look at the sma' fry they destroy. If you kill a fish at a quarter of a pund weight that in time would come to the hook at a quarter of a stone, look at the waste. But the

trawlers increase the fish supply, and Professor Huxley says the harvest of the sea is practically inexhaustible. Possibly they do bring in more fish ; flat fish not so likely to be taken by the line, but I maintain that a trawled fish choked in the net is no more healthy than a smooored sheep, and you ken what 'braxy' mutton is. Fish killed off the hook are cleaner and better in every way ; and as to the harvest o' the sea being inexhaustible, what does that matter to us if the fish are driven from the banks our fathers have fished before us for years, and we cannot follow them ? We have no claim to the banks, no doubt ; but we claim fair play, and steam trawling, as it is carried on, is unfair to every line fisher on this coast. But we'll not argue the subject. Let's have a look as to where we are."

Following him on deck, I found we were running past Inchkeith on our lee, and opening up the little fishing bays on the Fife coast, while Largo Law and the Ness of Elie loomed ahead. In each of these little land loops live colonies of hardy toilers of the sea, who venture out in all weather, fishing being their sole means of support. With the crofters of Skye and Barra, and the northern Highlands generally, they are not to be identified, as the latter are only amphibious, making out an existence by cultivating their wretched little crofts, so as to raise a boll or two of oatmeal, a bag of potatoes, and a lamb or two to be drawn at the "fank," and paid for when the weaning time comes round by the laird's factor. Though good hands with the herring-net, these men know little about the far more venturesome work of deep-sea fishing by line, in which the East Coast Scotchmen from Buchan Ness to St. Abb's Head are such adepts. A great many of the latter are of Norse descent, and they still retain all the Viking-like characteristics of their forefathers, venturing further out to sea than a West Highlander would ever dream of doing. While exceedingly superstitious, they are also exceedingly fervent in their religious devotions. No boat ventures out on a Saturday, and no sail is hoisted till twelve o'clock on Sunday night has struck. They have a strong love of home, and no matter though they may round Cape Wrath, and fish the edges of the outer Hebrides, and follow the herring as far south as Kinsale, the old place is not forgotten ; back they come with the full hand rejoicing, or

the empty hand sorrowing, to cast their lines in the old waters.

With the Island of May looming out broad on our weather, and the Bass Rock on our lee quarter, sheets were eased a little to the still freshening breeze for the run out to the Dogger Bank, the favourite fishing ground of the men of the north-east coast, as the home of the halibut, the king of all deep-sea fishes, and one for which there is an unceasing demand for the London market. "Give me the head and shoulders of a halibut," said our skipper, taking his pipe from his mouth; "and so far as my own taste is concerned, ye could have the whole shot, though there's not much fault to find wi' a dory." The flavour of the halibut is, indeed, a long way in its favour, there being a shellfish-like relish about it, when cooked, which puts one in mind of the heather-like flavour of grouse, and this, together with its scarcity, always makes a strong demand for it, more especially in the Metropolitan market. "All good things go to London," says the steersman, with a smile, as, putting the tiller under his arm, he rummages the tobacco in his pipe with a pin, "and Londoners are too clever ever to let them back. What gluttons they must be for fish! for a' that we catch in the Firth of Forth never seems to be kenned to them."

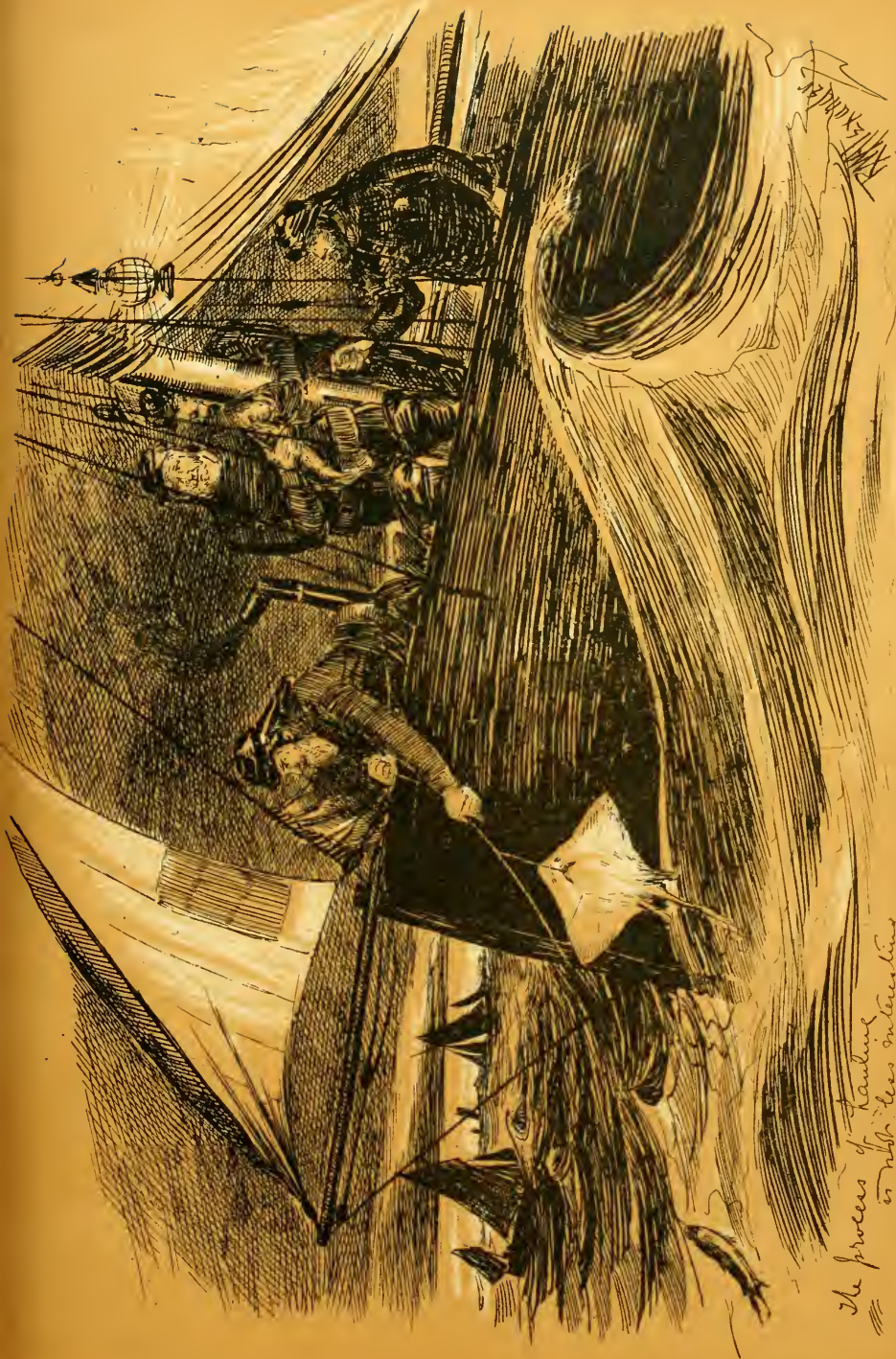
"No, nor a few more other friths," was my reply, as I thought of the thousands all along the south coast who were toiling hard to supply the morning market at Billingsgate. Dusk falling brought out the stars and a few harbour lights along the coast, yet still, with sheets freed and a ripple at our stem, on we danced, till latterly the combers of the heavier waves were raising clouds of spray, and I was forced to retreat into the little cabin and enjoy my pipe as I half leaned, half crouched, in a corner. Taking another look out, I saw that there was more pleasure for the time being to be found under cover, as the seas were chasing each other along the decks, and making it appear as if they would like to sweep everything overboard. Following the example of two of the crew of six, I buttoned up the neck of my coat and fell fast asleep. Next morning, after having had my slumbers repeatedly broken by the heavy thrashing of the sea against the boat's bows, I got on deck and found that we were right out at sea, our little craft's head still pointed for that happy fishing ground, where awaited our coming, no doubt, the savoury

halibut and "turbot sweet and succulent." Little brown specks in the horizon ahead our steersman, who was doing his trick of the tiller in the absence of the owner, who had gone below, informed us were boats out of Anstruther and Cellardyke, going down to the grounds like ourselves, while a couple of steam tugs astern were trawlers going home to catch the market. With little warmth, sailing out to the Dogger Bank is anything but pleasant work, and the Corinthian crew of a five-ton yacht, who have done a stormy passage in summer from Holyhead or the Clyde to Kingstown, would find their craft much more comfortable than an East Coast fishing-smack.

It was not till the shades of night had darkened again that we had reached that point where the owner had decided to shoot his line, and preparations were made to break the by this time to me disagreeable monotony. The sun had just died down, leaving a sickly yellow glare on the western horizon, betokening wind and wet, and the breeze seemed to take courage in the darkness, and sweep down on us with increased strength.

Each man having securely fastened his oilskins round him, so that the wind cannot get in, the herrings for bait are brought on deck, and the hooks, all bare, arranged round a small piece of wood placed in the lee side. In the case of haddock and "short line" fishing, the hooks are all baited with mussel or clams arranged in a box or basket and run over a roller held by a man in the stern, as the boat holds on her course; but when shooting the long line the hooks must be baited as they are thrown over. As the night promised to be pitch-dark and the sea heavy, the men fasten a lantern so that its light will be cast upon the bare hooks and the bait box, and make themselves fast to the centre of the boat in case of their getting washed overboard, as both hands have to be used in their operations. The sheets having been trimmed, the skipper takes his place at the tiller, and sitting up grimly as a Viking of old, the salt spray crusted on his shaggy brown beard, steers a straight course, so that, without the wind shifting, they shall be able to haul the line again on the return without tacking. All is ready; the buoy with the flag-staff which marks the end of the line has been thrown over, and the work has commenced. The wind whistles shrill at times in the halliards, and pipes every now and then a deeper note through the block at the mast-head, while the

sea races over us from bow to stern till we are waist-deep. Yet, regardless of wind or sea the work goes on as regularly as if the men were on the pierhead at home. Hook after hook is picked up, the bait knife flashes in the glimmer of the lanterns, the bit of herring is affixed, and away it goes in the darkness and the flying foam. Each man takes his turn, and each hook must go without delay, baited or bare, for if the line be checked for a moment all that has gone over will be ravelled. Now and then a bigger sea seems to catch the night-penetrating eye of the steersman, and there is a warning call and no more—the boat dashes through it and holds on midst the spindrift and the flying snow shower, which can only be detected in the light of the lantern to leeward out against the darkness. Suddenly the heads of all are turned to windward, as if something were expected from that direction. There is a sudden flicker on the top of a wave a short distance off, which disappears as the men, who have never missed a hook, bend their eyes down to their work again. It is only another boat engaged in shooting a little higher up to windward, that is all. Hook and knife and herring, herring and hook and knife; the work goes on as fast as the little craft can keep sailing, each of the men watching well that he shall not get caught, for should he get fastened to the line he may be dragged overboard and drowned, as the weight of that portion already shot will take him down. Only a month ago they will tell you that one of their number was hooked in the hand, and was dragged to the stern crying mournfully, “Lads, I’m gane! I’m gane!” and “gane” he would have been had not his comrades caught firm hold of his legs and held fast till the hook broke. But the risk of death from hooking is too great for them not to take some precaution against it, so that strapping young fellow who sits close to the steersman, with his knife glittering in the fitful flashes of the light, is hard on the watch for a foul. One cry from the men engaged in baiting, and with a sweep of the blade the line is severed and the life saved; and should he miss, heaven have pity on him—that’s all. Smashing through the white and green water for about five miles, the line has been run out, and the work of hauling has to be commenced. Fish bite at the bait as the hook reaches the bottom, not (as many suppose) as it lies on the ground, and so little time between shooting and hauling has to be allowed, the



The process of hauling
is not less interesting

regular interval as a rule being five minutes. Though not so grandly picturesque as the shooting, the process of hauling is not less interesting. As the line has to be taken over the bow, the tack of the lugsail has to be fixed on the crane in the lee-side in order to be out of the way. Should the wind be dead ahead the boat beats back to the other end of the line, and hauls in the direction that the line has been shot. Sometimes, though, the line is lifted by the boat making short tacks, and in such cases the great depth of water forward, which yachtsmen object to in East Coast boats, as causing a tendency to broach to when running, helps to steady the craft in a sea-way, and so cause no undue strain upon the line. Lying-to for a time, we set the stove aglow before starting on our return voyage, and the men seemed to be thawed into fresh life by the boiling tea which they poured over their throats. Getting on deck again the boat was reached slowly along the wind, every length of herself bringing some new arrival. Heavy headed cod, soft-mouthed as a fawn, came to the bows, reluctantly followed by the long, lean ling, and were chucked forward to join their dead brethren, clear-eyed and green backed, as all fresh cod should be. Then came turbot, ever welcome, followed at times by a halibut or a brill, while huge skate flapped and wobbled and fought in vain to get back to their homes at the bottom. There were many curious fish that were not welcome, and were dismissed with slight imprecations, and many that the keepers of aquariums would have been glad to have kept, but for which there was no common market. A good snug repast, and a chat round the stove, another shot of the line, another haul, and with as good a store of fish as was ever lifted off the Dogger Bank we are running with sheets squared off to an easterly breeze for New-haven again, each man anxious to get in in time for the market, for a fish is perishable the moment it is taken from the sea. A market missed, and the result of all the hard, dangerous, cold work may be lost. Altogether, it is a most precarious living the men make who fish.

THE CAULD NORTH SEA.

Sing ho ! my men, to the halliards bend,
And hoist the tan-brown sail ;
The wind is light, but ere the night
It will blow a good half-gale.

The drum's on the pier and the hills look near,
 And there's weather gaws on our lee ;
 But the cupboard's toom and the fire is dim,
 And sae we maun oot to see.

The man's no richt that gangs oot the nicht,
 Is the cry o' the unco wyse ;
 But the lass steps weel that carries the creel
 That's laden wi' cauld advice ;
 So bend, my lads, to the halliards lend
 Your weight, and let's go free ;
 Let the wind blow bold, let the wind blow cold,
 We will fish the cauld North Sea.

Frae an angry sea let the coward flee
 Who can face a hungry wean ;
 Better the drift o' a cauld, cauld rift,
 Than the sicht o' a cauld hearthstane.
 So her helm, boys, ease to the tumbling seas,
 And let our bark go free ;
 Be it coarse or fine, we maun shoot our line,
 And fish in the cauld North Sea.

We have wives, my men, we have lives, my men,
 And eke we have lines and bait ;
 So the cod and ling we'll hameward bring,
 And the halibut and the skate.
 And better fare wha wad want mair ?
 So let our bark go free,
 Nae wife or wean will e'er complain
 While there's fish in the cauld North Sea.

THE FIRST OF SEPTEMBER.



HARVEST was early in the year 187-. The cereals had grown well, and been early in the blade, and a scorching sunshine during the dog-days had changed what had been a waving mass of green into a long plain of yellow, in one of the sweetest of Yorkshire vales, in the course of a fortnight. Farmers—the acknowledged champions of grumbling—were grumbling because they had actually nothing to complain about, and stewards met their landlords with smiling faces, which seemed to say, “A little more of this sort of thing and there will be no need for abatements.” When people look into the happy, smiling face of Nature they are forced to smile and look happy too; and so they did that year in the little Vale of Beckham, where everyone was cheery, from the village pedagogue, who dismissed his scholars to let them work in the fields, down to the little “yokeling” who was just learning his letters, and with whom ever afterwards harvest would be associated with holidays and with pleasure. The hay, too, had been well secured; the turnips had escaped the fly, and were a strong-growing and a healthy crop; and the only fear which existed regarding the potatoes was that they might prove too numerous, and that a good price would not be obtainable for them. Matters, these, of small importance to the City man; matters, these, however, of vital interest to the folks of the country. Poor crop, short rent to the landlord; and poor crop, small pittance to the people. Hunger was, no doubt, the first Radical, and he comes to the platform every year yet when short harvests are the cause of empty bellies.

It was, therefore, satisfactory to see on all sides, as we drove through the Vale mentioned, the signs of plenty, and that great progress had been made with the work of harvesting. Broad acres of wheat stood in stacks, and broad acres had been bared, the ragged, rough edges of the newly-built cones in the farm-yard showing that all hands about the homestead had been busy in the work of leading. Still, there were a good many acres

which had to fall to the reaper, and one could readily see that the newly-flushed coveys would find shelter in many places where dog and man would not be allowed to follow, for grain must always come under consideration before game, privileged as a sportsman may be to wade through mangolds or swedes. Still, in the cool morning air, in which there was a slight touch of that early autumn frost which nips the leaves, we could see that there was quite enough of ground bare to allow of our making a fair bag, though it must be said the 1st of September is a little too early for partridge-shooting generally.

With a smart rattle downhill, we were soon at the approach which led to the keeper's lodge. We were London sportsmen who held no lease, and therefore his (the keeper's) home in the woodlands was our headquarters. We found him, along with a brace of light lemon-coloured pointers, all in readiness for the day's work.

"Good morning, gen'men," was his salute, as he touched his cap respectfully; "you've brought down good Lunnun weather with you, at any rate."

"Good morning, Luke; but you seem to have had it pretty fair here for some time past, judging from the forward condition of the harvest."

"Well, nowt to complain of, sir; but there's a lot of uncut stuff on the land yet, and it don't do nowadays for farmers to holler till they have all into the barnyard. Howsoever, there's no want o' birds this year, and, so far as I've seen, there's a good stock o' hares, so you won't want for sport, at any rate. If I only saw all the stuff down, and the pheasants clear of the reapers, I'd feel kind o' happy. But they're a deuced sight worse than telegraph-wires was ever on partridges; and you know, sir, what a howl they made about them when they were first stretched."

"But how does the reaper kill 'em, Luke?" asked my friend, who had little country experience.

"Bless you, sir, the simplest thing in the world. If it's the mower, see, in haytime, it just goes along *click, click*, and the old hen sits watching the drivers and horses till her neck is between the finger-bars of the cutting-board. *Click* goes the knife, and away she goes at the neck. Well, with the reaper,

old and young, both partridges and pheasants, sit still till their heads are cut off sometimes; ay, and I've know'd hares and rabbits lie till they were torn in two. There are lots of such cases as I have seed, and there are hundreds I don't hear of 'cause the harvesters, you see, when they get the dead birds say nowt about 'em; they just put 'em in the sheaves, and slip 'em home to the pot the quietest way they can."

"And can you do nothing to prevent it?"

"Nowt! You can't be on twenty farms at once; and if you did, you couldn't walk up and down the growing stuff in front of every reaper. If they'd only stick in some long blunt bars, to wake up game a bit ahead of the knife, it would do good, it would; but gamekeepers' opinions ain't much respected nowadays nowhere, so it's no use talking."

While he was discoursing on his favourite subject, his assistant was busy getting out our guns from their cases, and putting them together, while we buttoned on our gaiters over heavy shooting-boots. At a quarter to nine o'clock the old keeper led the way through a narrow belting of larch, across a grass field rough with rag-weeds, to a stretch of wheat-stubble, shaved as close down as if done with a lawn-mower, the sown-down grass having in the few days since cut overtopped the shorn stumps of the straw. There was barely as much cover left as would shelter a field-mouse, and it seemed madness to put the dogs over it. Partridges, however, feed close to the ground, and have the knack of squatting still closer—indeed, many times they will literally crouch out of a man's sight altogether. In the furrows (as a rule *now* farmers do not care for furrows in wheat-lands, save in cases where the soil has to be gathered into ridges, to allow the water to run off), the stubbles were long and straggling, the reaper not being able to bend down to them, and from one of these, as soon as we crossed the stile, a grand covey of nine strong birds rose, and, skimming the hedge ahead, drooped, and disappeared out of sight—"just where," as old Luke remarked, he "wanted 'em to go: Farmer Johnstone's turnips." Scarcely had we marked them over the hedge than, thirty yards ahead, a hare jumped up from his form, into which he had literally been served, and was bowled over with the contents of my friend's right-barrel, delivered just behind the ears, the place where the weasel himself would have

chosen. All ground-game, it is needless to state, should be shot well forward, for a miss past the nose is preferable even to the sight of a poor animal dragging itself away from you with crippled loins and broken hind legs. Who that has been rabbit-shooting over ferrets has not regretted seeing a poor coney, with the contents of two or more barrels, drag itself into a hole to die and be lost, and, not only that, spoil a clean burrow, for the ferret, if you put the latter in afterwards, would keep working at him, and lie up for hours. First blood having been drawn, and poor Puss transferred to the bag, old Luke wisely resolved to keep his dogs to heel, the field being so bare, and beat across it for any other odd hares which might be lying in the long stubble furrows, putting at the same time such birds as might be about into the green crops ahead. Three more hares joined their dead companion, a fourth stealing away, and two more coveys which we flushed went on into the forty-acre field ahead. Passing through the gateway, we swept round to the left, so as to work the outside of the March boundary first and keep them all inside. There was not as much wind about as would blow our smoke away (Schultze was not then invented), so we kept our backs as well as we could to the sun, which was now beginning to glare fiercely, and glance off the gun-barrels. Luke soon had his pointers well under command, though at first they exhibited a little wildness, and began to range wide. A mild rating steadied them, *and better*. Just as the old dog wheeled to the left up a drill, going grandly with head up, he stopped as if he had been put under the pressure of a Westinghouse air-brake.

"Ho, Pedro! Ho!" was the call of the old keeper. "Steady! Juno, steady! Now get forward gentlemen. Mark the birds, away, Hugh!" (to his assistant) "and I'll mark the birds that are down."

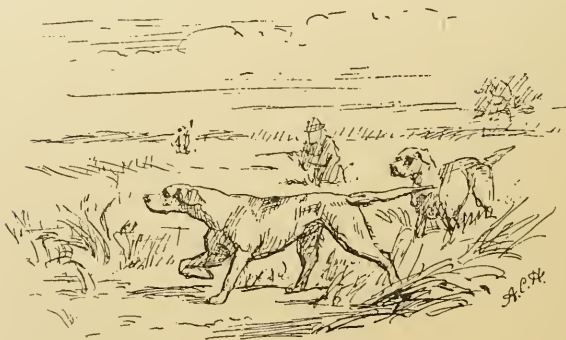
It is the opening day, and the opening covey of the season, and we believe in omens. We have had indifferent seasons with grouse which were opened with misses; and so, too, we have had good seasons which we began by scoring to the right and left. The old dog begins to move first one foot slowly forward as we close, and we can see from the fixed stare of his eyes, and the way his nostrils are literally dilated with the scent, that they are almost under him, if they are not running. Whirr-r!

There they are, with mother-hen in the middle, going off *week ! week ! week !* No firing into the bosom of them ! Be a sportsman, and not a sparrow-potter of Putney Heath." The outside bird is down to your right sharply, and as they go away, you choose the next with the left, and have the satisfaction of seeing it come down also. How has your friend fared ? He killed with his first, but you find him staring through the haze to look after the effects of his second. Yes ; there goes a bird, heavy hit and taking a different road from his mates. What is wrong ? Well, he is simply choking with the blood from his heart, and is gasping for air like a suffocating man. Where he flies he cares not. Now he begins to fly upward, and *up, up* he goes like a lark ; *up*, till he is almost a hundred feet high, and then dead he topples to the ground. He is what is known as a towering partridge, a puzzle often to young shots, who think that it is something very uncommon. The under-keeper has marked the place where he fell, and will pick him up at leisure. In the meantime, the birds which have been killed at hand have to be picked up, the dogs still crouching to the order, "Down charge !" Having recharged, they hold up again, in case there should be a stray bird left ; but we find them all away, and the call is, "Seek dead !" This is not always an easy matter with birds in turnips, which are only winged, as they run very fast up or down the drills, and so bother, and, indeed, sometimes help to spoil good dogs. In our case they are easily lifted and transferred to the bag. Walking carefully, so as not to smash down the haulms of the turnips, for the haulms are the lungs of the plant, we hold on our beat, and soon have the dogs standing before us statue-like as before. A brace and a half fall this time, and we succeed in scattering the covey, so that we are enabled to pick up an odd one here and there in a nice handy manner. Out of the forty-acre field we secure $6\frac{1}{2}$ brace and three hares, not a big bag, as some bags go, but a well-made one and one which we have enjoyed the making of.

Lunching at one o'clock in a shady nook, we have time to enjoy the beauties of the surrounding landscape, the changing foliage of the woodlands afar away beyond the yellow corn, along the top of which we can see driving along steadily the modern reaper, with its monotonous *click, click*, a poor substitute for the song of him who handled his hook so deftly in the days of

old. Voices nearer home call attention to the stack in the farm-yard, which has risen since the morning above the hedgerows, and is now on a level with the trees, and over all comes faintly the sound of a huntsman's horn. Straining our eyes in the direction of old Luke's finger, we can see far away on the dip of the horizon the figures of two or three horses, and a dark mass on the edge of a plantation.

"The P—— cub hunting," says the old man, quietly, "and the huntsman blooding the young hounds." Our repast finished, also a smoke, we commence work again, and in the shades of evening, when the autumn mists are hanging grey as from the smoke of our guns in the drift, we draw our cartridges and finish, with $14\frac{1}{2}$ brace and six hares, a most enjoyable First of September.



WRONGING REYNARD.

“T can't be stood any longer, I tell you, sir. I've lost over half a score o' lambs within the last fortnight, and what 'twixt bothering the ewes and that, I won't have it, nor will my neighbours either.”

“Well, Giles,” was the reply, “the first time you lose lambs in your place again, send over a messenger and I will draw your gorse. I'm as anxious as you are to kill off such mutton-eating foxes, for they are, as a rule, very little good for sport, while they swell the charges of the Covert Fund to a fearful amount.”

“That I'll do, Squire,” was the answer. “And you won't have long to wait either, I tell you. Good-morning, sir.”

The speakers were Squire Dovecote, the M.F.H., who hunted by subscription the county, and Farmer Giles, one of the most noted agriculturists and sheep-farmers in the district. For some time past great complaints had been made of lamb-worrying, a thing which had almost been unknown since the history of the hunt, for nearly all the yeomen were such good fellows, and so fond of the sport that they never grudged a lamb or two, and certainly never dreamt of charging for lost poultry, but this particular season the flocks had been so cut up and disturbed that they really could not avoid making known their grievances. It was curious, however, that all the complaints came from the district round Farmer Giles', and so the Squire concluded that there must be really one very bad fox about, seeing that the gamekeepers and those who had not been out watching, had been able to prove that the damage was caused by dogs.

About a week after the conversation which had taken place, the Squire received a letter at breakfast-time, stating that on the previous night, Giles had had two fine twin lambs killed, his neighbour, also, a couple, and that things were getting serious. The Squire was a man of action, and at the meet that day, which was in a totally different part of the country, he informed all those

present that he meant to have an extra day with "the lamb-worrying fox," and that they would "assemble" next morning at Farmer Giles's, at Dimbleby.

Next morning the meet at Dimbleby was one of the largest that had ever been known in connection with the Turnipshire hounds. The turn-out of hunting farmers was especially noticeable, and the Squire heard no end of complaints as to lamb destruction. The gamekeepers, of whom there was also a large attendance, seemed pretty confident that the damage was done by dogs and not by foxes, but this the farmers did not at all seem inclined to believe, and two of them particularly swore to seeing a fox scampering off in the grey light, and leaving behind it one or two dead lambs.

"There can be no doubt whatever as to its being a fox," said the Squire. "But the worst of it is that I am only allowed now to draw certain coverts in the neighbourhood. This Mrs. Sprattcake, since she has come into Glenlockie, has sent orders that we must not on any account cross her lands."

"Yes," said one of the keepers, "and it's my opinion that that's the whole cause of the mischief, fox or no fox. She's a regular dog-fancier and goes out every day with about thirty curs, and pets of all kinds, and lets them run wherever they please, so that they are as often on our land as her own, and it's all but impossible for one to have game or foxes within a mile of her woods."

"Ahem!" said the Squire, "that is just one of the difficulties one has to put up with in hunting a country like Turnipshire. However, we must do the best we can. We'll draw Pickerton Wood first, seeing that two lambs were killed on the edge of it last night."

As the hounds moved off two of the young gamekeepers emerged from the barn grinning from ear to ear. "Now," said one, "there'll be the finest bit of fun that has ever been seen in Turnipshire. And sir," says another to the writer, "mind not how hounds may run, make as straight as thou can for Missus Sprattcake's, at Glenlockie. There thou'lt see some fun and no mistake."

With beating hearts the field followed the Squire and the hounds, and with beating hearts they awaited that signal dear to all sportsmen.

A SOUND FROM AN HONEST HOUND.

Come let the poet sing his loves,
And praise the lark at morn,
I will prefer the screaming cry
And note from hunting horn.
Of all the music ear can charm,
That rings the welkin round,
By far the dearest is to me,
That sound from honest hound.

A steadfast lass, a social glass,
A kindly friend and true,
Will break the back of worldly cares
And carry one life through.
The warming grasp of honest man,
With heart that's staunch and sound,
And oh, far dearer than them all
That sound from honest hound.

Let whimpering cowards whisper lies,
They dare not speak aloud,
And false-nosed curs as false proclaim
Falsettos to the crowd.
Give me the bell-note ringing clear,
By its note I'll be bound,
No truer voice makes heart rejoice
Than voice of honest hound.

Soon the voice of an honest hound proclaimed that the lamb-killing Reynard was at home, and everyone set himself down in the saddle to ride his hardest. A screeching view-halloo lets all know that he had broken covert, and out after him the hounds streamed so close together that a sheet could have covered them. Never had anyone seen hounds go such a pace before, and the "spills" at the first half-dozen fences were common. Close up galloped the Squire, determined to have "the villain" as he called him, and get rid of the farmer's complaints at once and for ever. A burning scent was all in his favour, but to his chagrin he saw that Reynard was making right for the Glenlockie woods.

Taking the advice of the young gamekeeper, we at once made our point Glenlockie also, and were rather astonished when pounding along the road to find them driving along with a third as furiously as a fire-engine after us.

"He do go well to have had his foot in a trap," said one.

"It was only a squeeze below the dew claw," said another who was standing up and holding on by the hind seat.

So this is not a regular running performance in the hunting-field, we thought; we must see the finish of it. Circling to the right the hounds jumped the boundary just as we rushed through Glenlockie Avenue gate, with the spring-cart just behind us. Here, right in front of us, was Mrs. Sprattcake, with a dog-whip in her hand, and round her a collection of the dogs of all nations. One moment more and there was a scream, and a howl and a noise as if a Pandemonium of dogs had been let loose, for the whole of the Turnipshire hounds, heads up, ran right into them. The Squire, the huntsmen, and the two whips were on the spot in a moment, but it was fully a quarter of an hour before anyone could make out the real cause of the commotion, save the three young keepers, who kept back in a shaded place among the laurels. Walking our horse back, we asked them to give us an explanation, and on promising not to "peach" or the Squire might kill them, the oldest said: "Well, you see, all these lambs were killed by an Exkimaux dog belonging to Missus Sprattcake, which is as like a fox as anything and which made the farmers swear to it. Bill and Jim and me here, trapped him last night and tied a couple of red herrings to his tail, and Bill slipped him out o' covert as soon as the hounds were thrown in. But mind, you won't blab, will you? for if you do we'll lose our places."

Promising faithfully not to do so, I rode down to the scene of the dog fracas, and found, naturally, the lady in a violent temper, saying that she would have a thousand pounds damages for her favourite Esquimaux dog, which was evidently in a dying condition, whilst Tom the huntsman was repairing some damages which had been done to one of his favourites by a hill dog.

"Well, ma'am," said the Squire, "I don't mean to be offensive, but if you urge this claim, I shall plead justification on account of sheep worrying which has now been fully proved to-

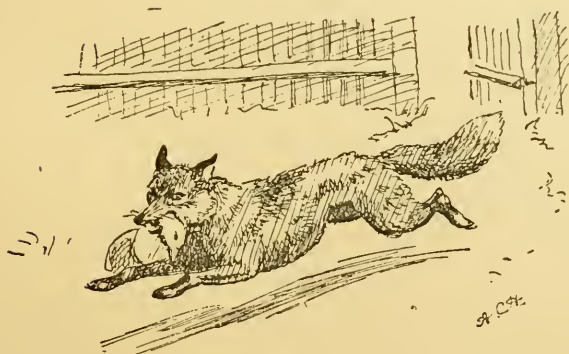


"Love me, love my dog."

day and, not only that, but an action of damages for the lost lambs." This settled the matter, and she bowed and walked off, followed by her curs, save the Esquimaux, which the gardener wheeled off in a barrow.

"Well, just think of that," said the Squire, "the best run we have had this season, and all after an Esquimaux dog. For goodness, sake don't let it get into the *Field* or we'll be the laughingstock of everybody; but oh, what a scent they give off, don't they?"

"Yes," I said, "stronger than a fox's, though I could not, when I thought of the two red herrings under its tail, but think that we had been wronging Reynard."



ROUND THE MOUSE AND HOME.



WAS off Gravesend, one day, three gallant yachts did lay,
 Three gallant yachts as e'er yet sailed the sea,
 Formosa's feather blue, at her masthead gaily flew,
 Cuckoo and Vanduara on her lee,
 We'd the gun from Commodore, and then five minutes more
 Until our stems were tearing up the foam.
 And our boat sprang to the gale, as she bent down to the rail,
 When sailing round the Mouse, my boys, and Home.

Our mast is strong and tried, loudly our Captain cried,
 And we need not be frightened for the stay,
 So do not let her lag, but carry it or drag
 Now, topsail, boys ! come, quickly hoist away !
 First halyards, then the tack, then sheet well home the slack,
 While waves ahead their silv'ry manes do comb,
 She raised her weather side, while bursting through the tide,
 When sailing round the Mouse, my boys, and Home.

With jib topsail on the stay, 'mid clouds of flying spray,
 We reached like eager greyhounds down the shore,
 Until a creeping sound told us that we'd smelt the ground,
 And the pilot cried "No more ! away ! no more !"
 So luff, good captain, luff ! you've borne away enough,
 No longer now on this tack must we roam,
 Till the tide begins to flow, you must not risk her so,
 When sailing round the Mouse, my boys, and Home.

Rounding the weather-mark the cry was "Homeward Hark,"
 As racing with a ripple at our stem,
 The shrimpers stood amazed, and the bargees wildly gazed,
 Such racing they had never seen on Thames.
 Like water-horses brave, we bounded o'er each wave
 As hunters bound o'er pasture and o'er loam.
 Then, hip-hooray ! well done ! we draw the winning gun,
 When sailing round the Mouse, my boys, and Home.

A DAY'S PHEASANT SHOOTING.

 HOUGH hunting men will always contend that pheasants and foxes can be preserved together, gamekeepers are prepared to swear to the contrary, and "velveteens" has generally the best in the end of all such arguments. No doubt Reynard prefers the cleaner morsel, viz., the bit out of a rabbit, his favourite piece being the loins ; but when rabbits get scarce, or what amounts to very much the same thing, cunning and wary, he will take what he can get, be it wild duck, pheasant, or barn-door fowl. It is not in winter, however, that he is sweet on furred game, but rather in summer, when he will lift the hen pheasant off her eggs, leaving the latter, unless timeously lifted and put down again at the keeper's residence to be hatched, to rot and get useless. Nor is the old cock very safe, for when strutting through the growing crop of oats or beans alongside the cover, he will give out, in ignorant conceit, his triumphant crow, and find himself seized by the neck by "the varmint," which has, of course, been attracted to the spot. The young brood suffer heavily, foxes making their haunts by stubble or cover side, and feeding on them when they get a chance. As a rule, however, pheasants will not suffer so much where rabbits are plentiful as where rabbits are scarce ; but as a heavy stock of the latter would not be allowed in these modern days of Game-law legislation, the keeper has no remedy. He must, therefore, hatch a heavy stock of pheasants at home, and after hand rearing, scatter them about in his woods. This system is now the cause of the much-despised style of battue shooting, which is as unlike the pheasant shooting of old as partridge driving is unlike partridge shooting in the pre-percussion days, and before Joe Manton's name became a household word amongst sportsmen. Every day we read of tremendous "bags" ("sacks" ought to be the word now) of game being killed by the parties assembled at the country houses of noblemen and gentlemen in the shires ; but when one reflects on the

fact that the dead birds have been domesticated by hand, and reared, if not actually hatched by incubators—he is apt to ask where the sport comes in. In the good old times it was different; and though there were hot corners as now, where what are now designated “bouquets” of shots were common, they were with real wild-hatched birds, strong of wing and quick and straight in flight, and, as sportsmen found, hard to hit and difficult to bring down. Good old rocketers, however, are now as rare as pheasants promise to be altogether in a few years, for the farmer seems to have got his eye upon them. If they are not allowed to be sold as game no doubt they will pass for good spring chickens; but that, however, is a matter foreign altogether to sport, and it is of some genuine good sport—pheasant shooting—I pruned my quill to write about.

Grouse had, as usual, gone out on the 10th of December, about this time eleven years ago, and moorland shooting had, of course, closed, save for white hares, and I daresay I might add black-cocks, for somehow, as you are allowed to take a black-cock how you can, you seem to be allowed, notwithstanding the Close Time Act, to take him whenever you have a chance. On the finishing day, my shooting partner and myself, who had leased a nice long stretch of heather on a lowland moor, wound up our season by bagging eleven brace and half-a-dozen hares, our total, notwithstanding keen and careful shooting, and an unlimited expenditure of shoe leather, being fully fifty brace behind what we were told the moor was good for. We had no marketing arrangement, as some partners have, but we were rather disappointed all the same, and gave vent to our feelings rather strongly to the factor, who lost no time in communicating our expressions of dissatisfaction to the laird. Fortunately for us the latter was wooing the county for Parliament at the time, and was of course anxious to keep on good terms with as many as possible. I was therefore not in the slightest surprised when a nattily dressed groom drove up to the door in a neat Whitechapel cart one day, and touching his hat, handed me a note. It was from his master, and was to inform me that, together with my friend, we were granted liberty to shoot his covers at C——, as he found that he would not be able to do so himself, as he intended leaving shortly for the south of France for the winter. The note concluded with the natural request

that we should be good enough to inform his keeper the day on which we might be expected. After having communicated with the leaseholder, we made all our arrangements for enjoying to the full the great privilege which had been granted us, for the C—— preserves were famous as being the best stocked in a very strong game-preserving county where Reynard was occasionally pulled down with a couple of ounces of shot, the cry of "Tally ho" having been unheard in the neighbourhood for years, the country having long ceased to be hunted. After an early frost had lifted to a gentle, genial thaw, a note was slipped down to the head-keeper, Malcolmson, to inform him that he might expect us the second morning afterwards with the breaking of the daylight, for we meant to have as much sport as we could 'twixt sunrise and sunset. Six o'clock in the morning saw us breakfasting together in front of a blazing fire at the house of my friend, who was a confirmed bachelor, while a brace of Clumbers shared the hearth-rug with my old Gordon setter, who was a sort of "dog of all work," good on heather or on stubble, first-rate in cover, and with a tender mouth, very fond of doing a little retrieving when required.

"We're going to have a glorious day," said my friend, after tapping the glass, and looking out of the window from beneath the blinds. "The sun is going to break, without too much colour in a grey sky, and the glass has risen three-tenths since last night, and promises to go steadily up."

"Just the sort of weather, too, I like," I said, helping myself to some crisp oat cakes and some genuine country bacon. "Frost is not good weather for pheasant shooting at the best, but it would not suit the C—— covers at all, as the birds would run on ahead from the ringing noise, and clear off to the other side of the river at the gullies."

"The ground's nice and soft to-day," continued my host "and without wet; the cover will not be uncomfortable. 'Gad,' we're in luck altogether! and I feel like shooting, too; my eyes are as cool and as clear as icicles, and my fingers are itching every five minutes to clutch my gun."

As he spoke he rose and walked over to the mantelpiece, against which leaned my favourite old "twelve," the barrels, bright and polished, reflecting the glow from the blazing coals. Picking it up, he flung it to his shoulder, but with the remark

"too much crook in the stock for me," he crossed the room and seized his own, the dogs following at his heels as keenly as if he was in cover. Handling it affectionately he laid it down, with the remark, "Hang me, old lass, if birds are missed to-day don't blame me, for I'm as fit as a fiddle," and came back to the breakfast-table. More oat cakes were swallowed, more bacon, some smashed game, the flavour of which showed the 10th of December to be not far gone, and with a farewell cup of tea we were ready, just as his man, who had carried his bag on the moors for years, brought the trap round to the door. Shoving our guns into their cloth covers, and seizing each our game-bags, which contained all our cartridges, a good-sized whisky-flask, and a pair of dry socks, we bade the old housekeeper good-bye, my host telling her to be "on the hark for the gig-wheels" about seven in the evening. Taking our seats, we were soon whirling along the road behind the fast trotting pony, our coats buttoned up to our necks, for the morning had a little left of the recent frosty chill in it. Steadily the sun rose and dispelled the darkness, and as we turned into the main approach to C—— Hall it was broad day, clear and grey, and with a look about it of lasting. Late-feeding rabbits limped about in all directions, while here and there a pheasant ran across the road and disappeared amongst the rhododendrons. With a sweep to the left, and then a sharp turn to the right, then down a slight hill, we found ourselves brought immediately in front of the keeper's house, where Malcolmson, who was one of the best of his craft in that part of the country side, was waiting for us, together with two of his men.

"Good morning, gentlemen," was his salute as he touched his Balmoral bonnet, "I am glad to see you've brought good weather with you."

"Good morning, Malcolmson," shouted out my host, "I hope your pheasants are all in good order, and fair condition?"

"Well, sir, they might have been worse if it had not been for some of us last night."

"What d'ye mean?"

"Oh, just some of your old friends!" was the quiet remark, accompanied by a cunning smile, for my friend was the procurator-fiscal or public prosecutor for that district of the county, "but we were too many for them."



"Shaking his fist
at a couple of notorious poachers"

"Got any of them?" was the sharp interrogation.

"Just go in there and see," was the reply.

The Fiscal rushed through the door of a little stable, and then we heard him burst out into a foaming lecture to some persons unknown. Following, we found him shaking his fist at a couple of notorious poachers, who stood tied to the manger scowling like demons. The thought of how his promised day's sport had been nearly spoiled seemed to have fairly aroused my sporting partner, and, to the great amusement of the old keeper, he kept repeating to them that it would be "five years this time, and not one day less, no, not one." The men had had but little sleep, but still they declared that they did not feel in the least tired, and, as the policeman who had been sent for made his appearance in a few minutes to relieve them of the charge of their troublesome customers, they vowed themselves, after a drop of good Glenlivet, ready to start at once.

With three rabbit-catchers, each carrying stout ash plants, and with Sandy, the coachman, to assist in beating, we were ready for the day's work, and to seek out more successfully than the poachers, it was to be hoped, the desired pheasants. Woodcock we were told to look out for, as several had been flushed by the rabbit-catchers when visiting their traps, and as there were half-a-dozen roe deer said to be shifting about from haunt to haunt of the long stretch of woods which fringed the river Con for a few miles, we had good promise of large game also. The beaters having lighted their pipes, jumped into cover at a place where Malcolmson had agreed they should commence work. We filled the chambers of our guns with cartridges, and were ready for anything, my companion taking the bottom side, and leaving me to manage the upper. Rattling their sticks the beaters soon raised a noise, while, to mark their own whereabouts, the calls went continually, "Shoo cock, cock! hey cock! hoo cock! herry cock-cock!" in merry fashion.

"Mark!" on the right came the cry from below, and the sound of wings broke on my ear. Clearing the tree tops grand pheasant cock came sailing into view, and, just as he steadied his flight with one of those peculiar waverings of his wings, I shook him up with the contents of the right barrel, and down he came with a crash amongst the hazel bushes a few yards further on. My old setter had been "roading" a rabbit

just below me, but gave it up, and crossing the ride made to pick it up, but the keeper's big retriever was before her, and, disappearing, came back with it in his mouth, still fluttering. Almost at the same moment the rabbit dashed into view, but being in the act of doubling back my gun after reloading, I was too late for a snap at it.

"Shoo cock!" cried out the old keeper, as a signal to the other beaters; and the response was taken up with the calls of "Hey cock, cock, cock!" and the beating of sticks against the trunks of the ash trees all along the whole line.

"Mark! cock," came the sharp call, followed by woodcock on the left. There was a moment's silence, and then my friend's gun rang out the echoes of its report, sounding away ahead through the windings of the wooded glen.

"Ready, my boys! All right!" came the answer back to the query, "Have you got him?" And on we moved again.

"There are pheasants running on in front of us," said Malcolmson, "but you need not go forward yet."

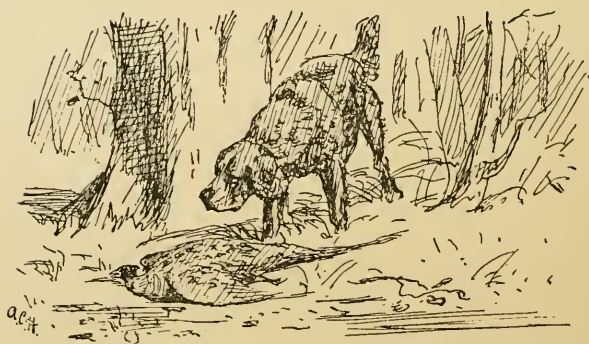
Scarcely had he spoken when, put up by the old setter, a woodcock went flip-flap up the ride, to get my shot just as he closed on the edge of the trees. "I just thought so; in fact, I was just going to tell you that I never saw this place fail to hold a woodcock any winter that they were in," said the keeper. Picking up Master Longbill, he placed him in the net of his bag, and then advised me to hurry forward till I came to a small gully or opening which ran down to the river, there to wait for the pheasants, which he said must be running on ahead of the beaters, but which would be sure to halt for a bit amongst some thick scrub and artificial cover which had been made from the faggots or prunings of the foresters. The Fiscal was warned to move forward also, and we were soon able to hail each other from our stations. Betwixt tree-top and tree-top on each side we had a clear forty yards, which was ample to allow us a single bird going quick, but little enough for a right and left, or the use of the second barrel on a fast-going rocketeer. "Shoo, cock, cock!" went the call of the beaters again, as they rattled their ash sticks on every tree trunk that would ring, and then came the call, "Mark! cock" and another woodcock came along silently, to find himself the victim of a leaden shower from my friend's gun, as he zig-zagged down the ride. Scarcely had

its echoes rang out, than whirr came the noise of many wings, and down came half-a-dozen pheasants. Singling out a cock which was heading the lot, I turned him tail upward, and was able to shift to another of his sex, the warning words of the head-keeper, "Ware hens!" ringing in my ears. As the beaters closed they came away in strong flights, and it was a case of load and fire as rapidly as we could, both at the top and bottom of the pass. When the men emerged from the thick undergrowth at the edge we had done good work, and ten cock pheasants, three woodcocks, and a number of odd rabbits were picked up, little powder having been wasted.

Crossing the gully the beaters held on down the river side, and with an occasional woodcock now and then, a brown hare, and a rabbit every hundred yards, we made the woodlands ring merrily to the cracks of our guns. Another pass or gully was in time reached, and here, as before, we had more warm work, making some splendid shots at rocketers, which, sailing high over head at great speed, caused us to swing on their line of flight as far as one would require to do on a December driven grouse with half a gale of wind at his back. We were warmly at work, when the stirring shouts came, "Mark! roe-deer on the right," followed from near the bottom by, "Mark! roe-deer on the left." Two winged chances were allowed to pass unheeded, and wisely so, for just at the minute out popped from the thicket, between twenty and thirty yards above me, a nice little roe. Giving her the right behind the fore leg, and following it up with the left in the same spot, she rolled over just as Malcolmson, who had been coming up, rushed out opening his knife, and as the gun of the Fiscal rang out below. Looking round I saw we had both of them, so that we had made certain of our Christmas venison.

The sun by this time had crossed the meridian, and having had a good time of it we counted the slain by the river-side below, got out the luncheon hamper, and enjoyed ourselves in a manner that only a successful shooting party can understand. With few hours more of daylight, and plenty of game, we took it easy, hunting the outlying hedgerows with mossy banks for woodcock, beating the "buttons" or little bits of outlying woods in the fields, and traversing some odd patches of rushes for an occasional jack snipe. When the sun began to sink we had

little ammunition left, and not much powder in ourselves ; and, tired and weary, and the big flasks emptied, it was not to be wondered that Sandy, the coachman, had to shake us up in our seats in the dog-cart when we arrived at the door of the Fiscal in the evening.



A ROUND OF THE LINKS AT GOLF.

“HAT say you to a round of the links?”

The speaker was one of those individuals who are to be found in nearly every shire in the country—a country gentleman of narrow acres and limited income, one who had more time on his hands than he had money to spend it with, according to his sporting proclivities. The scene was a club reading-room in a well-known northern town, and the time noon. We had got through the previous day's *Times*, just in, read the London letters of the provincial papers, glanced hurriedly at the Parliamentary news and latest betting, looked over the pictures in the illustrated journals, fortified ourselves with some tit-bits of society gossip for after-dinner purposes, and then felt that we had a good six hours on our hands. In the average country town there are, as a rule, few ways of enjoying yourselves beyond a gossip at your gunmaker's, a look at some new fishing tackle, a stroll into the stables of the local posting master, to examine and report on some new purchase, or it may be a dull and dreary game at billiards, at which you knock the balls about in a style which puts you in mind of Gog and Magog in Cheapside. “A round of the links with all my heart,” was my reply. “Anything that will pass the time, brace us up a bit, and give us an appetite for dinner.”

“Well, then, let's stroll out to the Golf Club-house.” So saying he put his arm in mine, and we started for the links, which were situated a short distance from the town. Though golf has, during the past few years, come greatly into favour in the South, there is every reason to believe that it will never make strong headway so long as men can throw a ball or handle a bat, for Young England will always prefer cricket; but on the north side of the Tweed it must ever remain a popular pastime. The game of kings, princes, and lords in the days of the Stuarts, it is the game of princes, peers, and peasants in the North at the present time (Prince Leopold was an honoured and a playing member of the premier club, the Royal and Ancient

St. Andrew's), and it may be truly said that it is the grand recreation of the whole legal profession of Edinburgh, some of whose members have been known to express as much grief over the loss of a hole as over the loss of a case in which the panel's life was involved. Along with curling it is considered to be orthodox, and some of the Scotch clergy are said to be fully more clever on the green than they are in the pulpit—a fact which, however, is possibly not so very remarkable after all. The great charm of the game consists in the variety of the play (no two strokes scarcely being the same), the pedestrian exercise one is led to take, which otherwise he might not care for, the use of the muscles of the arms and body in the swinging of the club, the gentle working of the brain in choosing clubs, determining style of play, and the patience and necessary control of temper, which is essential throughout the game. In fact, golf is a grand, healthy exercise for mind and body, and one which commends itself to professional men of all classes.

After a walk of about two miles, or twenty minutes as we might say, seeing our travel is regulated by time and not by distance now-a-days, we reached the club-house, a little stone building situated by the seashore. The green-keeper, who was (as is the case in nearly all Northern golf clubs) the club-maker, was absent, "he having," said one of the "caddies" or club-carriers, who usually hang round such places, "gone out a short time before with the 'Cornel,'" the Cornel being one of those enthusiastic golfers who would have taken his golf-sticks to bed with him had his wife allowed him.

"Yonder they are," said the urchin, pointing with his finger, "just bending for hame," and, following with our eyes the direction indicated, we saw two men, one dressed in a red jacket, followed by two lads carrying clubs, rise against the horizon on the sea-edge, and sink into the hollow again.

"Well, I think we'll wait for them ; they won't be long ; and we'll have a foursome, and I daresay a little whiskey and water won't spoil the play of either of us."

Producing a private key, he revealed a well-stocked medicine-chest—for golfers, though as a rule exceedingly temperate, do not altogether believe in total abstinence, a "black strap," which is good St. Andrew's for a pint of porter, being frequently

recommended by professionals to amateurs who begin to get a bit out in their play.

Doffing our felt hats we donned our cloth caps, and shifted our shoes for the hob-nailed ones which we kept on the premises, and were just swinging our driving clubs, as if we were at work, when in burst the Colonel.

"Ha, how are you?—Glad to see you out; it is a rare day for golf, and I do not think I ever saw the putting (pronounced like butting) greens in such grand order."

"They hav'na been in sich grand order this year, Mr. Watson," said the green-keeper addressing my friend, who was not so much of a stranger; "the dry east winds have made the turf as springy and clean as what you ca' a billiard-board—though what a billiard-board is I dinna ken."

In a few minutes afterwards we had arranged all preliminaries for a foursome, in which I found that I was pitted along with the professional to face the other two, having the military gentleman as my immediate opponent.

The green-keeper drove off with as clean a "swipe" as ever was struck, and, favoured by the wind, cleared a bunch of whins growing on a distant slope, and ricocheted over the knoll out of view.

"Well, that is a long ball, and no mistake," said his opponent (my friend), "but are you sure you're not in sand?"

"Just clear of it," was the reply; "the sand bunker's tae the left."

"Thank ye, Sandy, for the caution; but I'll not risk your road, any way."

As he spoke he fairly opened his back to it, and, being noted as one of the best drivers in Scotland, he sent his ball even further than that of Sandy, who, however, with a quiet chuckle, let him understand that he was, "maybe, a yaird or twa ower faur."

Off we set, like men starting on a long journey, and quite as serious-looking as if we meant to cross Africa or discover the source of the Nile ere we returned, the Colonel, I could quite see, being as earnest as if he were leading his men up the heights of Alma. The east wind was nicely tempered by the sun, which shone out brilliantly, and, instead of being cold, was in that nice state of temperature which braces a man up and makes

him feel that he has lungs inside his breast. Indeed, we could feel the topmost buttons of our waistcoats bursting with their distension, while, below, our stomach was beginning to rake up reminiscences of breakfast, and make us hope that there was something good on for dinner.

"Here ye are, sir, ye've a nice bonnie-lying ba', as I said; take your driver, for this is a lang hole, wind at oor back or no' at oor back."

Taking my driver, as requested, I looked out my line, kept my eye on my ball, and, with a good full swing, had the satisfaction of feeling that clear click, which is something like the pull of a trigger when you have got the foresight of a rifle right on to the bull's eye, and saw my ball go clean and well away and then, caught with a swirl of wind, dragged off to the side.

"Verra weel played, sir, verra weel played, indeed," were remarks which put me into ecstasies with myself for the space of thirty seconds, after which I was quietly let down with the cautiously expressed opinion that "I was richt among the whins." Turning round to the left I saw the Colonel selecting his cleek, having found himself where Sandy fully expected he would, amongst sand. With an exceedingly neat shot he lifted his ball clear, but, striking a second face, it rolled only a few feet forward on the sward.

"You've got to play the odds," was the cautious remark of the old green-keeper as his opponent chose his driver again, returning it, however, to his caddie immediately afterwards, and asking for his "long spoon," as the ball was lying low in rather longish grass, which would not allow of a fair lick at it with a bold-faced club; and to the uninitiated we may explain that the spoon is so named because it is bevelled in the face so as to lift the ball slightly up, as well as drive it forward. Stooping a little with his right shoulder, he drove his ball well away, and had the satisfaction of seeing it in the distance roll on to clear ground.

As Sandy had informed me, my ball, though well driven forward, had been caught by the wind when in the hover and lifted in amongst whins, where we had a few minutes' searching for it. At last we got it nestling like a wild duck egg amongst rushes on a river's bank, and the old green-keeper had to make



use of his heavy iron to play "the like." This he did with all the cunning of an old hand, and I had the pleasure of seeing a clean shot left for me next time. The Colonel chose his cleek to play the odds, and was soon well on the green. With the same club I laid my ball within ten feet of the hole with the like again, to the eminent satisfaction of Sandy, who was feeling for his "putter."

His opponent played the odds again, but, whether from miscalculations, nervousness, or over-anxiety, was rather strong, the ball stopping seven feet on the opposite side of the circle from the player. Sandy took a careful look at the green, removed some little bits of wood, waifs from the seashore, smoothed down the grass here and there, and carefully noted the declivities, seemingly being determined in ending the hole in our favour with a single putt. But it was not to be that time all at once, for though the distance was well judged, as was the level of the land, the ball rolled within an inch of the mouth of the hole, and lay dead about five inches past. As it was, a certain finish for me next time, the green-keeper picked it up.

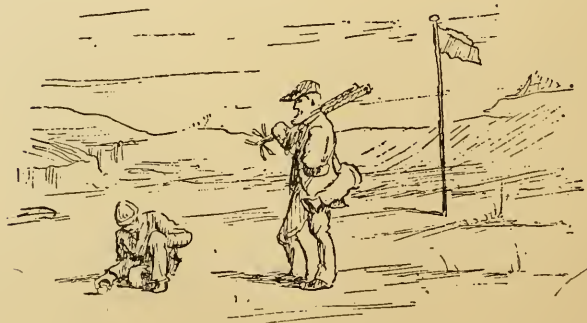
"This for a half," said the Colonel, meaning thereby that if he succeeded in holing his ball, he would cause a dead-heat, both sides having the same number of strokes. Choosing his cleek, which is of iron, as many good players do in preference to the putter, he made a good, fair, square try for it, but just as one would have thought it was going to drop in, it took that last turn which a roulette ball often does and remained out.

"Your hole," was his quiet remark, as the caddie lifted the ball out along with some sand on which he teed it again, about the place from which it was customary to drive off and within a few feet of my own, it being our turn at driving. The hole was a short one; and it was considered the proper thing to be on the putting green in two—a drive and a shot from the cleek.

"Topped it, sir," was old Sandy's remark, as I saw my ball, instead of rising in the air, roll clean along the ground, a fair enough style of play at cricket, as avoiding all chance of a catch, but anything but clever at golf. I had struck my ball above the centre, a stroke which is even worse than striking too low, so long as you hit the ball at all, as the turf will skin to some little

depth. The Colonel was not a long driver, his swing being shorter than either of ours, but he rarely missed his ball, was always in good line, and possibly over a day's play his driving was as successfully rewarded as a strong "swiper's." This time he placed his ball beautifully for his companion, and, Sandy being bunkered, I had to play the odds. With "the like" they had their ball dead; and, as Sandy failed in his long "putt," and the Colonel holed his ball with his cleek in really charming style, they had the hole, which made us so far even. The third we lost through getting amongst sand, out of which we found it almost impossible to hammer our ball. The fourth we gained and the fifth we halved.

Starting for home all even, we warmed down to our work in earnest, feeling actually warm, though the drops at the noses of the caddies showed the east wind to be piercing cold. The remaining holes were all keenly contested; and it was not till Sandy, with a long, well-judged "putt," holed our ball at the final that we won the round by one hole. Fortified by a "black strap," we started for another, which they won. Then came "the rub," which we pulled off, having enjoyed our afternoon in as healthy a manner as it is possible to do, and thoroughly convinced that the game is one of the healthiest for mind and body one can play, with the great charm of being most inexpensive.



WHITE HARE SHOOTING ON LOCH KATRINE SIDE.

“ CANNA lee my Highland hame,” we hear Duncan singing in the little boat-house by the loch-side as we stroll on to the lawn in front of the lodge after breakfast ; and, in truth, as we look around we do not wonder at hearing him express this opinion. The hills are brown, the larch woodlands all bare, and there is not one vestige of autumn glory left, but trailing mists, which come creeping, serpent-like, through the glens, or rising slowly up the face of the mountains ; but sharp snow-clad peaks, shining in the sun away beyond a lake of silver at your feet, and an atmosphere which is so clear that you feel the upper buttons in your vest beginning to crack, compensate for all the colours which delight the scenic artist. There are no birds to give us an opening carol, but the grouse-cock is crowing away happily, and sportsmen do not wish to hearken to sweeter music. Bah ! talk about the Highlands of Scotland in autumn ; you should see them in a clear, crisp morning in November or December, when the frost-wreaths are across the window-panes, and everything is a mass of fretted silver-work, shining now red, now pink, now golden in the sunlight.

But we had little time to stand and gaze at the scenery, for Duncan made his appearance from amongst the copsewood behind, whistling the remainder of the Highland air, and with customary Highland politeness bade us good-morning. No sooner had he done so than he suddenly motioned us to be silent. Pointing up the hill with his finger, he said, “ Do you not see a blackcock sitting on the tree there ? ” Though we were scarce as certain of its being a blackcock as he was, seeing that from his habitually having to scan the hills around morning after morning he could detect anything strange on tree or hillock at a quarter of a mile’s distance, we saw something dark, and the youngest of our party, who was as keen as a Highland fox-terrier for sport, was soon shoving a brace of cartridges into his gun, which had been standing in the corner by the doorway. The

keeper having directed him how to proceed in his stalk, we saw him get into a little ravine, and waited and watched anxiously. About ten minutes after he had gone out of sight, we saw that the black mark was something possessing life, as it rose into clearer view, and there was a puff of blue smoke and a bang. We watched to see if it had gone away, as we were certain our sportsman was a little too late. The blackcock when he leaves his perch, by reason of his own weight sinks a little, and so one is very apt to miss him just as he starts off. Our youthful friend was in good time, however, for in a minute or two he re-appeared, triumphantly waving his trophy, a grand old cock, which had been enjoying a morning reverie in quietness.

"And now, Duncan, how about the white hares? have you men enough for a drive?"

"Shentlemen, if you're ready, I'm ready, and the beaters iss ready, and the hares iss ready too," was the old Highlander's reply. "And so if you will get your guns we'll pull down the loch in the boat, because we will not be able to take the hill here. They are all waiting at the ferry with Donald."

As we had a long climb before us, we lost no time in getting hold of our guns, and, with cartridge-bags pretty well crammed, and a couple of hampers laden with all that was good and strong, for we well knew how the Highland keepers and gillies would welcome a bite and a dram, we got down to the boat-house, and soon were leaving a gentle wake behind our wherry as we pulled along the oak-fringed beach, where the wash at times from our oars went away bubbling up amongst the exposed roots which mark the winter flood-tide of the inland lake when the mountain-burns have been rolling in fierce spate for days. Now and then we would pass over a spot where the old keeper had lifted a good trout, for he was a keen fisher, and at another place would scan the trees closely as if expecting some blackcock like our friend of the morning to be making a quiet survey. As he pulled, our young friend in the bow struck up a song, which was more full of Lowland than of Highland sympathy. It was the song of

THE GAMEKEEPER.

Deep in the dusk of the woodland glade,
I live beneath an oak-tree's shade,
Where we hear the sound of whirring wings,
As the golden pheasant upward springs ;

There the livelong day
Do I sing and say
My lord full gay may live for aye ;
But there are none within his hall
Who live so free or so jolly as me,
In my cot beneath the old oak-tree,
For I am keeper of all—of all,
For I am keeper of all.
From early morn till setting sun,
With faithful dog and trusty gun,
I roam at will o'er moors and fells,
Through golden fields or fragrant dells.
And all day long
With joke and song
I smile at my lord to whom they belong.
May not his lot me e'er befall,
If he's rents to lift he has debts to pay,
And he's never without his cares they say
While I am keeper of all—of all,
While I am keeper of all.

And when the moon is shining bright,
And new-gleaned fields are gleaming white,
As the skulking poachers set their snares,
I crouch upon them unawares.
With many a thwack
Does my cudgel crack,
Till heads are broken, and bruised, and black,
And we've wrestled many a fall.
But they find in me an opponent tough,
And I laugh, ha, ha, when they cry enough.
For I am keeper of all—of all,
For I am keeper of all,

Rounding a little wooded promontory, the call came to pull easy, and in a few minutes afterwards Donald, the assistant-keeper, was helping us vigorously to get our wherry up on to the beach. Guns out, cartridge-bags on shoulder, and the hampers in the possession of two stout shepherds, the merry twinkle in the eyes of whom showed that they divined their contents, and we were soon on our way up the hill.

Our beaters were a very mixed-looking lot indeed. Some were shepherds, some rabbit-catchers, some woodmen, and a few were peelers of oak-bark for chemical purposes. It was a High-

land clan, indeed, in the uniform of Falstaff's army, for the needle had been hard plied on trew and kilt, as many a square or angular patch testified. Still, they all seemed to be happy and comfortable, and a carefully-divided supply of tobacco set their pipes into full reek and their tongues into endless wagging, their conversation being nearly all about dogs, guns, fishing-cobles, and fishing-lines. Toilsome indeed was the road to trace as that of Fitzjames ; but, with guns under our arms, we stepped out boldly, and breasted ridge after ridge till we came to points where the ice lay in long boulders, caught by the frost and congealed gradually just as it bubbled from the mountain-springs. A snow-shower which drove hard across us did not make the atmosphere more comfortable, but, as it was not of long duration, we did not mind it very much.

"And now, shentlemen," said the old keeper, "we will petter get up to the passes, and the peaters will sweep round the foot of the hill. There iss hares in plenty here, and hares always run up the hill."

After giving directions for the beat to the leading shepherds in Gaelic, he led the way, and we started on another and weary climb, which, however, subsequent experience proved was not as uncomfortable as the halt at the end of it. The cold wind was sweeping across the mountain pretty stiff, sending the snow flying in thin powder from the wreaths, when, accompanied by Duncan, I left what looked the main mountain-path, and scrambled to what was to be my position, the point of a peak or ridge at the head of a ravine which widened as it descended. Here, with the keeper by my side, I crouched, pipe in mouth, and waited for the coming of these little white-furred wanderers, which seem to think that there is safety to be found from every pursuer in the mountain-tops. The gun-barrels were too cold for contact with my hand, so I laid my weapon down, flapped my arms across my breast, unscrewed the flask, and shared a wee drap with the keeper, who seemed as cold as myself. Battue-shooting on a camp-stool, with a brandy and soda by your side, may be all very well for your Sybarite, but he would take very unkindly to a cold boulder-stone seat amongst snow 2,000 feet high in the teeth of a piercing east wind. There was plenty of beautiful scenery up there for one to go raving mad about, but no scene could come home to one's



"Marked!"

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mind as a picture save that of a blazing coal fire with some glasses and a bottle on the table, and a kettle singing on the hob. After an hour—a frozen hour, which is equal to two in a thaw—had passed, we heard a yelping of dogs away down in the ravine, followed at times by an unmistakable Gaelic yell. Duncan, with his bonnet off, crept cannily forward over the stones and peered away down amongst the frosty mist for a time. Returning, he motioned me to get ready with my gun—a work of some difficulty, for my forefinger had either got benumbed or my right-hand had lost its cunning. A thump or two on my leg brought back the circulation, and not too soon.

“Here they come, keep doon!” cried the young keeper. “Be quick with your second barrel, for they will bolt like rabbits—mark!”

“Marked” the little mountaineer was, for he turned a double somersault as neat as a circus-rider over six horses, while his neighbour, who had halted, reversed the feat by falling backwards downhill.

Refilling from my jacket-pocket, I was troubled with that worst of all nuisances—a malformed shell, which went in all but the eighth part of an inch and then jammed. Re-lock the barrels I could not, and, with fingers and thumb benumbed, I found it impossible to get it out again. Having no extractor, I passed the gun to the keeper, who, to my momentary surprise, instead of using his fingers, flung the barrels back, seized the shell with his teeth, and drew it as a terrier would a badger. Making a memorandum to see all cartridges fitted two by two in future for such work, I got a fresh charge home in the left, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing another couple roll over dead. The cry, however, was “still they come,” sometimes hopping along singly as if suspicious that things were not all right, sometimes in pairs, which would halt and listen right opposite and hearken for the sounds of the beaters, just as would a fox for the voices of his pursuers. The sport was not all confined to our own corners, however, for a heavy fusillade was going on both on the right and left, the poor hares evidently having a bad time of it on every hand. Their safety evidently did not lie in the mountain-tops on that particular day. The first rush of them being well over, a stray one made its appearance and met its fate, till a colley dog, at the tail of the last, whipped up, and we knew the beaters were at hand.

Gathering our dead, we find that we have, opposite our little fortress, the respectable lot of nineteen, and, closing on our centre and causing a full muster, we find that the dead in all number sixty-nine head. The hampers having been unpacked, and the contents disposed of, there is time for another short drive on the far side of the hill. From this we get thirty-seven more, so that when the slain are counted at the foot of the mountain the death total amounts to 106—a fair day's work, all will say, for four guns.

Leaving the slain at the Ferry Lodge in charge of Duncan, we launch our wherry again, and in the teeth of a snow-shower which promises to be the first of a storm, we bend hard to the oars, and soon are dusting the white powder from our coats in the little boat-house, while we watch the red glow blinking through the snow-laden casements of the lodge-window to tell us of comfort and good cheer after our day's sport on the mountain-tops.



SALMON-FISHING ON LOCH TAY.



RULY it cannot be said that if a man is fond of gun and rod, and has time and opportunity to make use of either, he has reason to complain of want of sport ; for no sooner are partridges and pheasants covered by the Close Time Act than the “stately salmon,” to use an expression of Burns, who had but one pastime—and that angling—is declared free. Of course, in southern waters, there is plenty of fishing all the winter round for those who wish to

—live harmlessly and near the brink
Of Trent or Avon, have a dwelling-place
Where I may see my quill or cork down sink
With eager bite of perch or bleak or dace.

But no angler who had lived much north of the Tweed would thank one for such a home, and such a system of “cork or quill watching.” Of course, it is not every Scotchman who is indulged with the privilege of salmon-fishing—thanks, no doubt, to his richer brethren of the southern towns, who have money enough to give the laird what he wants as rent, to the exclusion of those old village veterans whose forefathers have been privileged to fish the streams which run past their doors for centuries. This is a fact which his grace the Duke of Argyll possibly forgot to mention when he wrote his article on the depopulation of the Highlands, but it is nevertheless true that the town-life has become more attractive because the rich people have come out and with their money bought up the attractions which kept “Sandy the cooper,” “Duncan the farrier,” and “Dougall the weaver,” to their native sports, against all the temptations of riches. More sport but fewer sportsmen has been the result, but no doubt the laird has every right to do with his own as he pleases, though it would be better to see the spirit exercised as seldom as possible. The further north you go the finer, possibly, the fishing ; as, though the lakes and rivers of Ross, Sutherland, and Caithness Shires are mostly let along with the moors and forests, when civilly approached, the lessees in most cases will not refuse a respectable angler a day. In the counties further south the area of preserved water is much greater, and though

plenty of good trout-fishing is to be had, salmon fishing is as a rule the sport of the rich or the favoured.

In Scotland, as is well known, the rod season opens on Candlemas Day, the 2nd of February, and on that day will always be found a limited number of anglers on Loch Tay, which is as famous in its way for salmon as Loch Leven is for its trout. Spring fishing in Scotland, it need not be mentioned, is, as far as the surroundings are concerned, almost as cheerless as winter fishing in the south. But what cares the salmon-fishing enthusiast for the look of the surroundings? The peak of Ben Lawers may be covered with snow, and the Dochart may be fetching down with impetuous spate the brown floods from the upper haughs of the Highlands, the last of an Atlantic squall may be scouring the hillside and the wind cold enough to penetrate a half-dozen ulsters; but the "Knight of the Rod" (no kinsman of Dick Turpin, we deny we are in a punning mood) will not care a *wrap* for it. He dreams only of the salmon and the experiencing of that glorious sensation which yet makes his fingers tingle when he thinks of that day he killed his last fish of the season in October. But there is more than a rod required to kill a fish in Loch Tay, and more indeed than enthusiasm, for—

You may sing full early and late
Of your tak's wi' the bonny red hackle,
But the man must have *golden bait*,
And the man must have *silver tackle*,

if he would wish to be successful. The charge for boats on the loch to visitors staying at the hotel is £5 per week or £1 5s. per day, besides which charges the angler has to pay 4s. per day for each of two boatmen, also 2s. 9d. for lunch and whisky. As the fish are, however, allowed to be retained, and the average is from two to four salmon, the charges are not so very heavy after all. It is recorded that twenty-six salmon, weighing in all 55lb., have been caught on five successive days, but if I mistake not this was in the preserved water and by Mr. J. Watson Lyall, the well-known proprietor of the *Sportsman's Guide*, who is proverbially lucky, and what is better, peculiarly skilful, a qualification, however, which one fisher rarely cares to admit about another.

Though the scenery on Loch Tay is scarcely so beautiful in early spring time as in summer, it is not without its charms. There are few signs of vegetation about the hills, in the sheltered clefts of which patches of snow may be seen shining in the sun, but in the woodlands which fringe the loch edge there are bits of green every here and there which speak of a coming primrose or bluebell. On the lower slopes of the hills the young wild Highland cattle of Lord Breadalbane may be seen busily browsing in their winter coats of long, shaggy, dun or red brown hair, while in the glens the ewes are observable moving about in little white clumps, their shepherds no doubt watching them anxiously as they think of the approaching lambing season, the most anxious time, indeed, of all the year to the northern flock-master.

The fishes in all rivers and lochs have, as is well known, their peculiarities, and those of Loch Tay have theirs. Salmon of certain rivers have their peculiar delights in colour; on different days a particular one will be very deadly, and at different seasons of the year, other colours will again be more successful. This may arise from the various degrees of transparency of the water of different rivers, the colour of the ground at the bottom, and the reflection of the sun; but, whatever be the cause, it is the case. On Loch Tay the fly is of no use for salmon, and so trolling is the favourite system, the phantom being used most successfully. Possibly the keen salmon angler, who loves to follow the winding river, would not care so much for such a style as for a cast in his favourite pools; indeed, there are many northern fishers who cannot stand being cramped up in a cobble at all, whether they be in quest of salmon or trout, and with them we have a most decided sympathy. Give us an autumn day by the banks of the Annan at Hoddum, the salmon jumping in the pool above the well-known brig, the September sun shining down upon the yellow stooks, which stand in long rows round the ancient burying-place of the Irvings, the friends and countrymen of Carlyle, and above whose lone graves grow the hawthorn and the boortree bush, their boughs being laden with the old nests of the blackbird, while the fourmart has made a home for its young beneath a headstone, and steals a furtive glance at us as we pass with easy step and look over the wall. Over on the slopes is a hill of foliage,

the red of the beech being toned by the mixed yellow and pale green of the ash, while here and there the silver trunk of a birch stands out like a moonlight spectre. Rabbits rustle away hurriedly among the brake as they catch sight of us, and now and then a startled cushat jumps from the bough of a larch and with wings shimmering in the sunshine, sweeps across the river below, and holds away for some new gleaned feeding ground. We are wading the water, broken bubbling past on either side as we draw our line in and cast again o'er that little stream which is made by the water hurrying past a half-sunken rock. The purring noise has made us half asleep, but our dreams are the dreams of an opium-eater. On a sudden we are awakened to the most glorious of all sensations, and the most lovely of all music.

Let the courser cry, So oh !
 And the coachman sound his horn,
 Let the huntsman's Tally ho !
 Awake the hunting morn.
 No song that a sportsman sings
 So merry can make me feel,
 As the covey's whirring wings,
 And the birr of the merry reel.

The gun from the Commodore
 The yachtsman likes full well ;
 Can the racing man like more
 Than the sound of the saddling bell
 But the sweetest bell that rings
 Of chimes the merriest peal,
 Is naught to the whirring wings
 And the birr of the merry reel.

There is no dreaming now, it is man and tackle against fish and stream for a thousand. In vain he sulks, in vain he dashes up stream with fresh speed ; the colt is broken as much by his own struggles as by the work of the breaker, and our fish submits in due time to be led to that shelving bank like a child. The gaff well handled by a stout fellow in tweed does its work, and on the grass green bank, 'mid the musky odour arising from the stooks of oats, we drink success from the flask-lid, pluck a luscious brambleberry from the bush alongside to change the taste, and tired but happy bend our steps for home, while the

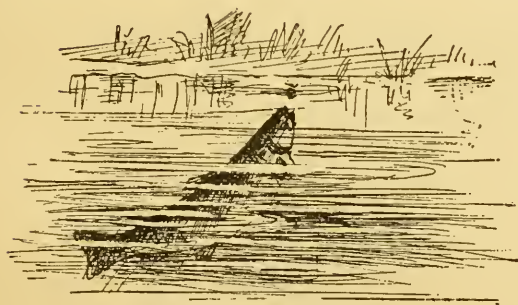


Salmon fishing on Loch Tay.

W. & A. Nichol
1874

see page 278.

sun sinks down red in the western horizon and the young plough lad hurries past us to the field to get one more cart of oats for that stack in the homestead on your left, where the busy farmer is tapering off the head into conical form with all the art that the bucolic mind is capable of. A good afternoon, the river in good condition, a good fish home with us, a good dinner waiting, a smoke, and a sound sleep certain, and what would a sportsman want more ?



SHOOTING WILD ROCK-PIGEONS; OR, SPORT IN LORD REAY'S COUNTRY.



HERE has been so much said and written about sport which is of a contradictory nature that it would be hard to define what a sportsman really is. "He can't be a racing man," says one, "for he really looks on at the game." "He is not an angler," says another, "or he would not impale a worm on a hook and then torture a trout, which is unsportsmanlike." "He must not hunt the poor fox, though the fox likes it," says a third. "And just consider the cruelty of coursing a hare," exclaims a fourth. And so on, till one is forced to the conclusion that Marwood must be the only legitimate sportsman we have. To define what is cruel in sport and to define what is unsportsmanlike is a very different thing; but through ignorance the two problems have been confounded. If the sticklers who are always searching out for cases of cruelty to animals were to devote half of the time they do to watching the poor over-beaten horses in the streets, thrashed when they fall into a struggle to rise, or protesting against that abomination of the age, the hideous spring-trap, they would have quite enough on their hands without getting sentimental over cruelties in our pastimes, which may be altered, but cannot very well be modified.

Not that there are many true sportsmen who will hold up their hands for the shooting of any birds or animals which have been in any sort of way domesticated. The art of venery has always been, and must always be, associated with that which is wild and free; and has ceased, and must cease, with capture or death. This same remark applies to bagged foxes, tame stags, caged hares, and to hand-reared pheasants; and if it has been ably argued in the House that such sports are more cruel than pigeon-shooting, that is all the greater reason that they should be abolished. Of the three sports(?), possibly the last two are the most unsportsmanlike. Pigeon-shooting, conducted on proper principles, might be fruitful of much good in the field, in preventing many of those young shots who

are at present leasing moors in the Highlands from blazing wildly into the brown of newly-flushed coveys, instead of singling out their birds in a clever manner. Such shots are continually raking the air in rear of their game, in the off chance of bringing down something, and leave far more birds to bleed on the bleak heath than the men of Hurlingham do pigeons to bleed on the house-tops. The best system of pigeon-shooting I ever saw was in Scotland, and like all good inventions it was born of necessity, for we had no traps. A dry ditch or brook was fringed roughly with gorse, and in it placed a lad with a basket of birds, whose duty it was to run backwards and forwards, while keeping out of sight, and at the call of "pull" to fling a bird into the air at whatever point in the ditch he happened to be; not at five yards intervals, as in the trap arrangements. The uncertainty of the point of rising, together with the fact that the bird came into view in the half-stride of the wing and gathering way, made the work of killing more difficult, and on the whole fair good practice for *rising* though not for *driven* game was afforded. With a couple of afternoons of such practice, betwixt the 1st and the 12th of August, pigeon-shooting might be made the means of avoiding a vast amount of cruelty on the moors. As to what is cruelty, I daresay every man has a different opinion; but if the Home Secretary can say that there is any class of sport which is more cruel than rabbit-trapping, with the ordinary iron trap, then I will confess to never having seen a pigeon shot or a rabbit caught. I must, however, make haste unto the far north, the land of the Mackays of Reay, not the modern Dutch land of Oppenheim, but the bleak north-west of Scotland, where Cape Wrath like a Viking sentinel of old keeps watch and ward over the stormy Minch.

Railway travelling, as is well known, is a very slow business after you pass Perth on your way north, and the nearer you get to the North Pole the slower it gets. No man needs to be in a hurry after he passes Inverness, and if Carlyle really smoked from London all the way to the Northern Capital, he must have acted wisely in getting out for a fresh store of tobacco if he meant to continue his journey and his smoke. There is not much to stop the train as a rule, but there are worse excuses than that made by the guard to the anxious Cockney passenger on asking if they had come to a station: "That the

driver's wife stops here, sir." Sometimes there is policy in leisure in the Highlands, for many an anxious passenger has grumbled for hours at being cribbed up in the compartment of a carriage to find that at his journey's end there is not a bed to be had for love or money, and that he will have to rough it as best he can. It is then that he wishes he could lean back on the comfortable cushions he has just left.

That, however, was not altogether our experience on going north a few years ago, for we found at the comfortable hotel at Lairg "all the comforts," as Bailie Nicol Jarvie has it, "of the Sautmarket," and little of the hunger and humbug which one meets frequently at hotels on the better patronised tourist routes, where all is flummery and tips for attendance. Though the principal seaport on Loch Shin, Lairg is not much of a town, in fact it is a combined hotel and post office, the latter being a much more wonderful institution in its way than that in London, insomuch as you can get supplied with everything in it, from a halfpenny stamp to a boll of meal. The Reclamation Works, a short distance off, have made it famous all the world over. There you can see now fields of oats and turnips growing where the heather used to wave and the grouse-cock crow ; and if you care to wait, a dozen or more of steam engines dragging heavy waggons, hauling sledges laden with boulders, tearing out trees or picking the Duke of Sutherland's teeth—at least, the Duke's toothpick is the name they give a huge anchor-like plough.

Fully a day off our journey's end, at half-past three o'clock next morning we find ourselves rubbing our eyes in front of the Highland "boots," who was appointed to see that no man missed the coach, and, after a hurried breakfast, felt ourselves more wakeful from the strong cup of tea supplied thereat, standing alongside a vehicle, a regular cross between an omnibus and a skeleton brake, watching the driver trying to arrange seats for *seven* and luggage for *fourteen* where there was only room for half. This he managed, much to his own satisfaction but scarcely so to that of his passengers, some of whom had to deposit themselves on the tops of portmanteaus so loosely secured that they had to balance themselves to keep from tumbling off, seats and all, at the curves and corners. Their positions were not made much more comfortable by

occasional thrashings on the cheeks from rowan bushes that fringed the cliffs of the passes down which the driver went most recklessly, quite regardless of a "blind" corner and the possibility of capsizing you sixty feet over a cliff. Shon Ross is, however, a good hand with the rough team he has got, and well knows his road. He is fond of his work and fond of his country; and will tell you, too, with much pride, that there is neither a tree nor a toll nor a thief in all Sutherlandshire. It is a long, wearisome journey up the north side of Loch Shin, with the half-way houses few and far between, and wee draps to keep the mist out, only to be got from the flasks. Skirting Loch Gean and Loch Markland, there is a watershed between the Atlantic and German Ocean, and, passing the Duke of Westminster's shooting-lodge, most pleasantly situated, we get fresh horses a short distance beyond. The drive becomes more picturesque as we hold close by the left of Loch More, and naturally becomes more pleasant with the prospect of our journey nearing its end. In a lovely little glen we meet Rory from Durness with his tandem team, a Shetland pony in front of a half-bred Clydesdale, and take our seats in his trap, while our driver holds on with the remainder of the passengers to the south-west. Sometimes walking, sometimes driving, we get on to Rhiconnel, a little fishing inn, where the venerable landlady holds capital views on temperance, allowing no one more than *one single* refreshment—it may be a gill or it may be a mutchkin. A merry drive of twenty miles more, amidst the wildest of mountain scenery, having had glimpses at times through the gullies of the Minch, and we strike the Grudie, the most distant fishing stream in the mainland of Scotland. Crossing the stone bridge, the Bay of Durness comes into view on the left, with the North Sea away to the N.E., and after a smart rattle we are at the Durness Inn, which is not, however, our resting-place, for our home for the time being is to be the ancient house of Balnakeille, once a residence of the Reay or Mackay family. Changing to the vehicle that is in waiting, we are soon out of the little crofter village, and wheeling to the left pull up before the hospitable mansion of our host, the sheep farmer who is occupant. There was still some daylight left after we had disposed of the Scotch tea which was set before us on our arrival, and ere the sun sank

low in the west, gilding the tops of the gneiss mountains, we strolled round this Viking-like mansion of the (at one time) most powerful clan in the north. The building, which is of the old Scottish style of architecture, consists of a couple of wings connected by a corridor; and its walls rise on the west side from the sea, which comes tumbling in on the reefs of yellow sand below in long rolling billows, which break and roar beneath the windows. No home could be more suitable for a Viking-like race, indeed; and no doubt Durness Bay, though not much of an anchorage, was well known to the Norsemen who rounded Cape Wrath in the olden days. The little churchyard close at hand, is interesting as the burial-place of Robert Donn Mackay, the Gaelic poet and the Burns of the Northern Highlands, above whose grave a monument has been erected, on which is an inscription in Gaelic, English, Latin, and Greek. The little mortuary chapel contains a monument to an ancient chieftain, which is not less interesting. It says:—

Here lies the body of Ronald de Voe,
Who was good to his friend but bad to his foe,
But kind to his servant in weal and woe—

a fair good character for any old Viking.

Next morning we were up betimes, resolved to have a try at the wild blue rock-pigeons on the shelves of the numerous rocky creeks and caves which are to be found along the coast, and after a refreshing swim in the pure salt water almost under our bedroom windows, and a substantial Scotch breakfast, seized our guns and made along the north side of the bay towards Farout Head, a huge rocky peninsula almost rivalling Cape Wrath, its next neighbour, which is situated about four miles to the westward. Though hard and wild, the scenery round the point is at times strikingly grand, the heavy seas rushing with a noise at times resembling thunder into the crevices, while the sea-gulls, which are to be seen in myriads, send up a screaming chorus. It was not, however, so much for scenery as for sport that we came out, and our eyes had something else to watch for than the distant loom of the Orkneys in the far horizon.

"Now mind be ready," said my host and guide, as we stepped closely up to a bold bluff which stood from the main precipice. "This is a regular dove-cot for them, and you'll find you will not

get so much warning as you would at a bird which is let free from a trap." We had closed to twenty-five yards distance of the face of it when, like a rocket rather than a "rock," and with a rattle of wings, something darted out, and with a regular wriggle went off down seaward. I snapped in his direction but missed, but my host more slow but more sure knocked him on to the sand below. The cracks of our guns having disturbed the remainder, they sprang out in a shower; but so smart were they that, though we singled birds as we thought, we got no more. Descending, we picked up our only victim, a hardy little fellow with darkish blue plumage, very diminutive, and as hard as a ball, quite a different bird from his brother of the woods, which is heavy but slow when on the rise, and rather soft of feather. Getting up on to the land again, we crossed to the other side, where I succeed in knocking down the first, or sentry, bird; for I am of opinion that, whether sea-birds or not, all those wild fowl which live on the edges of cliffs have a picket. The remaining three barrels of our guns went for another single, so that out of six shots we had but three birds, the breeze, which was blowing stiff and cold from the North Sea, being against us. Holding more by the village, we added a brace to our bag, but not without an expenditure of powder and shot. We then passed through the village to the famous Smoo Cave, celebrated by Sir Walter Scott, a huge cavern 100 feet wide by from 60 feet to 80 feet deep. Close by the sea, the shelves of this wonderful cave afford capital breeding-places for the blue rock, and we succeeded in getting some nice snap shots, though we unfortunately did not manage to secure our birds. With three brace and a half we bent our steps for home, thoroughly pleased with our work though our bag was small, determined to try the north side of the bay. This we did, after which we took a rest at angling, the place being literally an angler's paradise, and, after a fortnight's stay, crossed Loch Eriboll to Tongue, and found our way back by Altnaharra and Loch Naver to Lairg, thoroughly pleased with our sport in the Reay country, and our practice at the blue rock on his native crags.

THE POLLY HANN MARIAR.

A TRUE STORY OFF MARGATE.

[Dedicated as a warning to those people who are going to teetotalise the launching of ships, and break lemonade-bottles and bottles of zoedone on their bows.]



O bless yer, gent, yer haint got a cent
 To give to a poor old sailor
 Who's got wedged in fast on the sands at last,
 Like an ice-bound, North Sea whaler.
 Seen better days? Lor', I likes your ways;
 I believe I have never seen worser.
 Been mate and man in the best as ran—
 Ay, boats, sir, as carried a purser;
 And bless yer, too, I tells yer true,
 I'd a risen a good bit higher—
 Been a howner, yes; but I got in a mess
 With the Polly Hann Mariar.

A woman! ah no, it weren't quite so,
 I ne'er with the girls was a mixin',
 But a werry bad lot of a Gravesend boat
 A sort of a sea-goin' wixen.
 It wasn't just her, yer sees how it were,
 We got into rows o'er a bottle.
 A drop too much? No, sir, not such,
 For I'm sort of a kind teetotal;
 But a summat for beer, and I'll let you hear
 'Bout that same Gravesend flier,
 Thank you well, I know'd you's a swell
 (Ahem)! The Polly Hann Mariar.

When I'd been fust mate, I didn't long wait
 Till I passed and was permotted,
 To a fine new ship as lay on the slip
 Which the howners me hallotted.
 She'd a fiddle bow and I can't say how
 Lovely a figger-head on it,

And a face ! oh my ! o'er a figger so spry,
On the top, too, a big brass bonnet ;
She was clinker built, and had lots of gilt,
And didn't I wish I could buy her !
But the She-Shark-Shrew, she did prove untrue,
Did the Polly Hann Mariar.

Well, when down in the yard, I was seein' her sparred
And reevin' the runnin' riggin',
I'd a throat still hot, though nearly a pot,
I had round the corner been swiggin',
All steve and staunch she were ready to launch,
And in horder to be 'andy
In the foreman's house, just under her bows,
There was stowed a bottle of brandy.
The yard was cleared, so I wasn't afeared
Of anyone being nigh her.
"Some water," I says, "is quite good on the ways,"
For the Polly Hann Mariar.

So I burst the door with a spare dog-shore,
And the cork I drew with an auger ;
And with little short nips, then great big sips,
The lot I drank like Laager.
Not a drop I spilled, then the bottle I filled
With the best of good spring water ;
"The bottle she'll break," says I, "by the neck,
Will the howner's lovely daughter.
It's as good,"—but then I stopped and stood.
For there, with an eye of fire,
And a smile and a wink, then a scowl and a blink,
Was the Polly Hann Mariar.

The brandy, you say ! ah, well you may ;
But it weren't just quite that, blow you !—
For from that day long did things go wrong,
All just as I've got for to show you.
The ship all staunch were ready to launch :
From the bows the bottle was hanging ;
And the girl—ahem ! she stood at the stem
While the carpenters' mallets were banging.

"Down daggers," was cried, and she raced to the tide
 Like a flash on a tellergram wire ;
 And the bottle was broke, as the girl she spoke,
 The "POLLY HANN MARIAR."

Alas ! sir, for me, ere right at sea,
 Began the whole of my troubles,
 For my on-shore dreams were nothing it seems
 But sorts of South Sea bubbles.
 She'd buck, and behave o'er the tiniest wave
 Just like a hold wooden tressel,
 And for hangin' in stays in the ugliest ways,
 She were the werriest wessel.
 On her beam ends *too* she'd get, and the *crew*
 Would swear not to stand by her,
 And they'd all of them shirk and refuse for to work
 In the Polly Hann Mariar.

Well, it did come round, we was homeward bound,
 With a cargo from Oporto ;
 When in Biscay Bay she began her old way
 And the same old-fashioned sort o'
 Tricks she'd take, and the water she'd make,
 Till it looked as if she'd founder ;
 And we saw 'twas a case, from the old chip's face,
 As he went to the well for to sound her ;
 And, worst of luck, her pumps wouldn't suck.
 So the water rose higher and higher,
 And we tried to bale, but she sank to the rail,
 Did the Polly Hann Mariar.

Well, to the crews, I says, "My lads, any ways
 You have got for to wait upon her,"
 But they says, "Old Salt, it is all your fault,
 You're a regular sort of a Jonahr."
 So they launched the boat and off they got,
 And left me on board a driftin'
 On a sinkin' craft, so I made a raft,
 As the seas was over me liftin',
 And I got somehow launched under her bow,
 Just as well as one could desire,
 When, blow my gaff, but I heard a laugh,
 From the Polly Hann Mariar.

Well, my hair it riz when I looked in her phiz,
And I saw her ugly pictur.
Says she, " Old chum, my time has come
For to read yer a bit of a lectur.
In my hinfant days when on the ways,
And Archangel tar a-suckin',
My father, good man, a' old ship's husban',
He brought a bottle for luck in.
He says brandy's the thing for a good christening,
And this boat must be a flier.
Some good old Martel, and she's sure to go well,
Will the Polly Hann Mariar.

" Well, many a day it was stowed away,
But I knew the place where it hided,
For I saw it layin' 'neath the window-pane
' East by nor' o' my starboard eyelid ;
And I kept a watch on that old door-latch,
For fear it should go a-missin' ;
And aye I'd pray for the launchin'-day,
Just to get that father's blessin'.
Yes, I waited hot, with a burnin' throat—
For my mouth it was all a-fire—
Till the bottle they'd smash, and give just a splash,
To the Polly Hann Mariar.

" Well, there came to the yard, jist as I was sparred,
An unhanged son of a sea-cook,
And he broke the door with an old dog-shore,
And out, yes, that brandy *he* took,
Just under my eye. Lor', it made me dry,
For he swallowed all the bottle.
YOU DID ! you swab of an old sea-crab,
For I saw it go down your throttle ;
But I made a vow, and I've got you now
Right unto my heart's desire,
For that water neat (hic) you'll get a treat
From the Polly Hann Mariar.

" Yes (hic), I'm all right here ; I've the best of cheer,
And I feelsh inclined to be merry.
I'm full of port of a right good sort.
And some very (hic) good shorts of sherry.

The Polly Hann Mariar.

But I'm gettin' shick, sho (hic) I'll go (hic) below ;
 (Hic) my voish ish gettin' thicker ;
For though I knowsh well (hic) I can carry my sail
 I can't just carry my licker."
Three jumps then she gave to a passing wave,
 As she tossed her old head higher ;
Then down stern first she went with a burst,
 Did the Polly Hann Mariar.

Well, I drifted away for a night and a day,
 When somehow I got landed,
And the Board tried me for losin' at sea
 The ship that I had commanded.
The liquor, they said, had taken my head—
 Lor' how my eyes they did dilate—
And that *I* was drunk, *not the ship wot sunk*,
 And suspended my certify-i-cate.
So ne'er now I says send a ship from the ways
 With some stuff as has got no fire,
For if yer does she'll get wuss, ay, and wuss,
 Like the Polly Hann Mariar.



IN THE LAND OF THE CAMPBELLS.

IT is possible that by this time the pibroch is sounding a parody on a well-known song, and that under the bold peak of Dunaquoich and up the valley of the Aray the Gael is singing "The Cecils are coming, hurra, hurra!" as Lord Salisbury drives down Loch Fyne side, on his visit to the Duke of Argyll. In the old castle of the Maccalumore there have been many guests who were welcomed in a true Highland style. The first personage in the land has been under the ancient roof-tree, and who is there that can forget that ever-memorable day when the Marquis of Lorne arrived with his Royal Bride? Certainly not he who was ever troubled with a twinge of rheumatism. As to the writer's own experiences, they could not well be described. Yachtsmen who know what it is to be in a gale of wind with dragging anchors over the bows of a mixed fleet, with heavy showers of rain to indicate its force and direction, no idea where you were going to bring up or go down, and a free use of the Gaelic language, which would have delighted Professor Blackie, can possibly understand what were my sensations. It is to be hoped that the elements will be more kind on the present occasion, even though the month be the dark dreary one of November.

Leaving Rob Roy's country by way of Tarbert, and getting across under the grim peaks of the Cobbler Hill, up through Glencoe, by the Rest-and-be-Thankful, our little party got to Cairndhu, a snug little fishing village at the head of Loch Fyne, and a smart drive round a bend brought us in view of the well-known castle and village of Inverary ; but not to tarry, however, for we were booked further south, for a parting shot on a favourite holding, which belonged to an old friend. This of course was anything but the regular route to Inverary, which is best approached from Glasgow by the Lord of the Isles or the well-known steamers and coaches of Mr. David McBrayne. Sportsmen have, however, no particular route when they ramble, and our journey was made all the more enjoyable by reason

of the fact that it was not done in the company of those "Cook's couponers," who would like deductions made in their fares for every square mile of scenery they do not see on account of the mist. Inverary is not much of a place as regards size, indeed it consists at the most of some half-dozen houses, a few kirks, a hotel, a court-house, and a jail. It is the county-town of Argyllshire, however, and a Parliamentary burgh.

Though our feet were not on our native heath we remained "Red McGregors" still, and held on for Lochgilphead and the land of the Poltalloch, the stalwart chieftain son of which on two occasions stoutly fought for the Conservatives against Poltalloch, Lord Colin Campbell. From Skipness to Crinan Bay on the far side, every peak in the land has been written about by the deck loungers of the Columba or Iona, in fair or foul weather, while almost the whole of the West country school of Scotch artists have painted every fishing boat on the water and every peak of the peninsula's promontories. "Campbeltown Ho!" was our cry, for there were several sets of golfsticks awaiting us at the hotel there, and after two or three days' shooting we meant to have a round or two on the picturesque links of Macharohanish, which stretch away down the west side of the Mull of Kintyre. The dusk had long ago gathered down on Goatfell and the Arran peaks when we neared our journey's end, and we saw the welcome lights of the little whisky-making capital. Undoing our coat necks, we jumped down and kicked our legs at the door of the Argyll, needing but small invitation to taste and pronounce upon the native manufactures, of which whisky is called the "staple industry." We just landed in good time, for a storm, which had been sulking out to seaward all day, came in upon the place, all squalls, and ere we were ready for the post-prandial pipe, we could hear the roar of the heavy Atlantic billows in Macharohanish Bay. He who travels far in a day in the West Highlands of Scotland in October does not need to court sleep long, for, as a rule, it will gather down over him like a mist-cloud from the mountain-top. So, without exploring the place, we turned in, quite content with knowing that we were in a little city of distilleries and churches, a strong bane with a very weak antidote; or *vice versa*, although it is a moot question as to the one which proves spiritually predominant.

Breakfast next morning consisted of scones, oat-cakes, and the choice of a herring or a bit off a Campbeltown "tide-waiter." No cannibalism in this, however, for a "tide-waiter" in Campbeltown is a pig which frequents the fore-shores of the loch for what he can find left by the ebb, generally shell-fish, so that cockle-fed Campbeltown bacon is not to be despised.

But there is little time left to tell of a Campbeltown breakfast. The trap is at the door, the gun cases are inside, so are the golf-sticks, looking anxious for a taste of the green; and so are we ourselves five minutes afterwards, and whirling away westward.

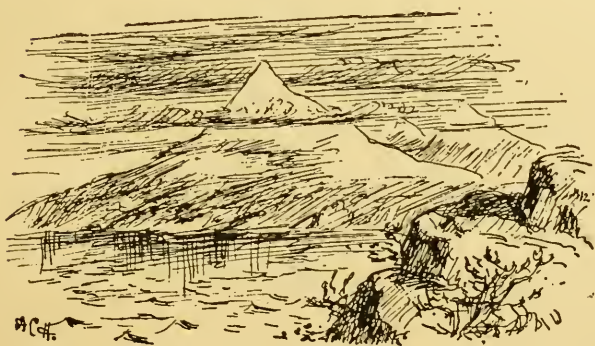
The garden of Argyll, as is well known, lies well to the southward of all the Maccalumore's extensive dominions, which extend from the shadow of Ben Nevis to where the light on Sanda Island casts its warning glow across the loom of the dreaded Mull or Moil of Kintyre. Possibly from his building grounds on the Cowal coast most of his rental is derived; but the best of all his agricultural land is in the Campbeltown district. Some of the finest herds of Ayrshire cattle are to be found there, and the Clydesdale horses, which have been reared on the lime-containing pasture, have many a time and oft won the leading prizes at all the principal shows of Scotland. New and commodious steadings have in recent years been built, fences made, and lands reclaimed, and, indeed, from Campbeltown west we could not find in all England a more prosperous-looking country in harvest time. The tenantry are all enterprising men from Ayrshire and the Galloways, and a good old fraternal feeling still exists between them; the Galloway and Ayrshire farmers chartering special steamers, and showing stock and visiting at the Kintyre Agricultural Exhibition, and the Kintyre folks as regularly visiting in the same way the Ayrshire and Galloway shows. Having in the south many of such enterprising farmers with capital and enterprise, and in the north and west, on his Highland properties, poor hard-working crofters, the Duke of Argyll has had opportunities possessed by no other landlord of testing the relative questions of large or small farms, and so possibly has had ample reasons for taking up his present strong position on the land question. The improvements on the Kintyre property during the past forty years have been very great and very effective, and anyone who has driven through it in the month of

August or September would think he was quite guaranteed in saying that it was indeed what I have stated it to be, "The Garden of Argyll."

But our driver does not let us linger long among the scenes of rural prosperity. We leave the stubble land and the land of full stack-yards, for one of heather, alder trees, birches, and boulders—the land of grouse and black game, the original tenants whom Nature seems to have given fixity of tenure. A Highland welcome, a true Highland shake of the hand, a "How do ye do?" an inquiry as to friends left behind, and we soon were enjoying the warm glow of our host's blazing fire. But only for a minute or two. Guns, dogs, and men were in waiting; the morning was fair and bright after the shower; the sun was getting high, so we were soon out and at the old game. Grouse we found were as wild and as wary as curlews. So we could not make much of them; but dipping into a ravine we found, in a small forest of natural elders, black game as thick as lapwings. The old cocks were wary, however, but by dint of a little dodging we managed to get some rare shots at them, and with a good charge in, sent them bowling over in a style which even surprised ourselves. The delightful sensation of catching an old cock fully and fairly as he rises out of an alder clump, at thirty yards, and of sending him down with a thump as if you struck him with a hammer, is one of the grandest in the world. He is, indeed, if not a foeman, a bird worthy of your ounce and a quarter of lead—a bird who has stolen all the artificially grown food he ever ate from off the corn-stacks of the farmers, and under any circumstances refuses to be petted or tamed in any way.

But while we have been busy with the black game in the glen of alders, the keeper and his assistants have been away round the shoulder of the hill, and when we get to the top we are just in time to meet the grouse which they have been driving in our direction. On they come like a rain shower, and holding forward for the chance of heart and head, have the satisfaction of seeing our bird killed clean and fall dead. But the last of the laggards has gone, the keepers appear in sight and count our slain, and we think it high time to sample again the "staple industry," and have a seat on the grey boulders, and enjoy the scenery. Jura we can see to the north, running away out seaward

with the smoke of a rounding steamer just marking the headland. Ireland we can dimly discern through the sea haze, while half-way over to Malin Head is an outward-bound Transatlantic liner. Dipping down into an undisturbed glen, we shoot a few black-cocks on our way homewards, and wisely retire before a sweeping shower which comes in from the Atlantic. Satiated with shooting, next day we get out our sticks and make for the lonely, lovely golfing course of Macharohanish. There, watching the ball, wind-carried at times by the squalls which send up masses of foam on the brent-clad beach, or aiming with deadly putt for the little round circle which lies as neat as a plover's nest in the centre of the circle of close-nipped sward, we spend a happy day, and enjoy ourselves far away from Cockneydom in the land of the Campbells.



A MIXED BAG ON THE MOORLANDS.



HERE are some men of opinion that grouse-shooting only lasts for a month, viz., from 12th August till about the middle of September, and that after that, sport on the moorlands for a season is over. Possibly the reason of this is that the grouse by that time have learned to take very good care of themselves, and are no longer the soft-feathered fluttering little poults which hang about their mother's tail while she wanders to and fro amongst the heather. Young Master Cock has by the month of October attained his majority, and every morning at daybreak, as he sits on his favourite little hill, will give his "little roc-cock-cock" of a crow with all the airs of a bird of independence. He by this time, too, has been taught the smell of gunpowder, and knows quite well that all men with dogs are not the gentle shepherds whom he used to stare at from the short heath-shoots in July. You need not try to throw salt on his tail now, nor, for the matter of that, No. 5 shot beyond fifty paces, for with the weight of a locomotive he has got the speed of a pigeon; and, though you can mark down a sore-struck partridge and find it, your grouse that crosses the first headland out of view is gone, even though he fall dead fifty yards further on. Of course, some folks will say "Why don't you drive them?" but it has to be borne in mind that all moors are not suitable for driving, and that, in fact, the birds on certain moors will *not* be driven. It is, indeed, a case of taking the horse to the water and trying to make him drink whether he is thirsty or not. This is the case with many of the best moors in the West of Scotland, and more particularly those on some of the hill-ranges of Loch Lomond and Loch Katrine where the birds, on being put up by the drivers, take sometimes a totally different direction, and so throw the sportsman stationed in the passes completely out. Still, if a man is not greedy on the bag, and does not wish to make top score and carry his bat out at the business, as many seem anxious to do nowadays, quite ignoring the fact that it is not the number you kill but the

style in which you kill them which marks a sportsman, he cannot have a better day than that which can be spent on a hill moor in Scotland in October putting together a mixed bag. That has been our experience for many years. Loch Lomond had been beginning to get a little ungenerous with us, the weather a bit boisterous, and a wee patch of white on the peak of the Ben in the morning after a storm was a sure sign of winter being at hand. The ptarmigan, of which there are still a few on the upper peaks, were beginning to show their winter plumage, the blue hare its winter fur, when the letter-bag which comes up every day by the steamer brought a welcome invitation from a laird on a neighbouring loch-side to come over and have "a blow at the grouse and what can be got." Next day, therefore, saw me *en route*, and the next again at nine o'clock after breakfast shoving a pair of Kynoch's well-crimped cartridges into the chambers of my old but still faithful and useful twelve-bore.

There was still a bit of purple in the ravines to reflect the autumn sunset as we stepped on to the heath, but the bell was rapidly disappearing, the rag weeds had lost their yellow heads, and the tangle grass was withered and drooping like the long thin grey locks on the bald heads of the aged. It was the autumn of Burns "sae pensive in yellow and grey," rather than the golden autumn of the August with its ripe fields set in the russet heath. Over the loch we could see the troubled harvesters busily engaged in setting up the stooks of grain which had been tumbled by the heavier blasts overnight, while the burns were tumbling down the hillsides, masses of beer-brown headed with a foam of churned froth. It was anything, indeed, but a grouse scene such as the purple heath school of sporting writers love to write about in their novels, with their picnics in the shade, and all that, but one of the best for sport and the making of a mixed bag a keen gunner could imagine. A walk over three miles of white land, on which we bagged a brown hare, and we reached the mountain-foot, and prepared to climb, for we meant to go down our beat S.E. to the march on the high range, and shoot home in returning by the loch-edge.

As we crossed the little wire fence a strong covey rose from the hollow in front and swept away wildly hillwards till they disappeared in the mist, thus showing us plainly at the outset that we must not expect birds to sit very close, and that we

would have to be smart in taking all those that rose within gunshot. Our dogs were a couple of Clumbers, and a pair of little rough-haired Scotch terriers, which worked close in front, and were useful in searching little grass hillocks for outlying rabbits, and ferreting out mountain-hares amongst the boulders. Ben, the keeper's big retriever, stuck close to the feet of its master, as it seemed always to do, whether at home or on the moor, and for our return beat, the keeper's lad had been sent down to a point with a brace of setters for work in some turnip-land where there were known to be several coveys of partridges which had not yet been disturbed.

It was a long, dead climb to get up to the higher slopes ; a case, indeed, of sticking your head down and your neck in the collar, and going dead hard at it like a heavily-laden draught-horse. The reward was, however, worthy of the toil, for when we looked round we could see the loch shining in the sunlight away below, with the fields and woodlands all laid out as if on a map at our feet, while away in the far distance we saw the Clyde with steamers busily plying upon its placid surface.

"And now," said my host and companion, "I'll keep on the upper side and below, and we'll see what we can do together between this and the march. Most of the birds will fly downwards, so keep just the least thing in advance of me. The mountain-hares will all run up, and I will manage to stop any of them you may happen to disturb and miss." And buttoning our coats, off we started. Scarcely had I gone a hundred yards than the little rough-haired Scotch terrier, which was working away in front of me, and seeming to be extraordinarily fond of the sport, showed that it had winded something. "A rabbit!" I thought to myself, though it is rather high up for the little conies, when on the opposite bank of a little mountain-streamlet my eye caught something white, and, in the fourth second thereafter, I rolled over, as it came into view again, a white hare. I was about to re-load, and had my finger and thumb on the lever, when there was another ominous little yelp, and a second with the terrier in pursuit crossed in front almost at my feet. I waited till he had gone up the hill a bit, and then pulled on him with the left, only, however, to see him disappear with a cloud of white fur left behind. Re-loading as I ran, I was in time to get a second

chance at him just clear of little Scottie, who was at his heels, and had the satisfaction of seeing him roll over. So far so good, I thought, one could not start to make a mixed bag on the moorlands better than with a couple of mountain-hares. The keeper came down and took charge of them, and then we crossed a large mountain-stream which was raging and roaring in full spate. This was a matter of no slight difficulty, but, with the friendly aid of the overhanging branches of a little alder-bush, we managed to swing ourselves over, and after a scramble up the bank found ourselves in front of a long undulating patch which the keeper said was full of grouse. Creeping gently up the near side of each hillock in the hope of getting a covey nestling beyond, I was about losing heart, when, *whirr!* away beneath me went a strong lot of birds. The right-barrel followed the outside bird mechanically, as if the finger said when it was on, for over he toppled headlong away down the slope. I was going to bring my gun down again when a laggard sprang from some bracken in front, and fell thirty yards off to an almost unmissable shot from my left. With the aid of Ben the second bird was lifted, though it had gone far down the slope, and the call was again onward. During all this time the gun of my fellow-sportsman had been silent, though once I had seen it raised and lowered, possibly at a white hare jinking out and in amongst the rough boulders. Far up on the edge of a precipice I saw him now stalking along with vigorous stride like a spectre in the mist, careless of the shower which now began to sweep along the mountain-side. Just as the latter was about to obscure him from my vision, I saw him throw his gun up and the two green puffs which bespoke a right and left go clear from the muzzle. The sound of the report had not reached me ere the old keeper sang out "Mark!" and down came half-a-dozen strong grouse like round shot from a 32-pounder.

"Dinna be in a hurry," says the old keeper, cautiously, "and be well forrit" (forward).

Well forward I certainly was, a good five feet ahead of the leader, I should think, and not too far, for I caught him clean, and he lowered his head, dropped his pinions, and went away dead down the slope below while I was following another with my left-barrel. With the second shot, however, I was unsuc-

cessful, as, though the feathers flew, the bird carried all the shot away without a shake. To secure the dead bird and hold on again was the work of a few minutes, and, the shower taking off soon, we had some capital sport, walking up our game and stealing round the corners and over rising grounds on the off-chance of taking coveys by surprise. When we came to the march, where we found the lad waiting with the setters, not to speak of the luncheon-hamper, we found that we had secured between us six and a half brace of grouse with nine white hares, and a brown one. Luncheon over, and a smoke, we started homeward by stalking an old blackcock which was busily feeding on the top of a corn-stook. We stuck to the old Scotch motto, "A blackcock, how or when you can," and gave him an ounce and a quarter of No. 4 shot from behind the hedge thirty-five yards off as he was busy filling his crop with oats. As the report echoed through the woodlands below a covey of black game rose from a small strip of uncut corn, and held away down into the copsewood.

"We can quite well manage to get a shot at them," was the old keeper's remark, "for I ken the verra tree on which they sit; but in the meantime we'll cross the stubble with the setters, and see if we can flush any of the partricks" (partridges).

The brown grouse of the stubble we did not find, but this was so far assuring, for if not in the stubble, we said, then they will certainly be amongst the turnips beyond. In this conjecture we proved to be right, for scarcely had we passed through the gate than the older of the setters came to a dead stop, while the other began to back. We lost no time in closing, and choosing outside birds as we stood dropped a brace each. They were marked down amongst the heather on the moorland edge, and then we continued our beat for the other coveys, from which we drew three brace and a half. Out on the heather we found them sit like stones, and picked them one by one, till we had as good a bag as you could get in a Shire turnip-field in September.

Having done with the partridges, we went off in search of the black game, and, true, enough, could detect them, as Duncan had said we would, on "the verra tree they sat," a well-grown alder standing almost isolated from its neighbours. How were we to get near them? was the question. This the keeper soon answered. "Ye'll gang right away past them *in*

their view, and gang *oot* of their view ; and then ye'll find a drain which is no very deep, and ye'll gang into that ; it will only take ye' up to the shoe heads ; and ye'll walk straight back to them till ye come to some rough bramble-bushes, and ye'll creep up behind the bushes till ye are thirty yards off, and then gie them fower barrels as quick as ye can, twa as they sit, and the other twa as they rise. I'll sit on the hill here in their view, and amuse them with the dogs. If they're watching me, they'll no think of you."

We went on as directed, sank out of view, waded back up the train to the bramble-bushes, and then crept with beating hearts close up to them. Yes, there they were all together, quite unconscious, watching Duncan and his dogs, the old man, whom we could see on the hillock, having his pipe in full reek. Getting the muzzles well to the front, and full-cocking, we both got up on our left knees, and as an old cock stretched up his neck as if to make a further survey, mine host said, "Now !" Our first barrels went simultaneously, and right in a black commotion of wings went *click! click!* the contents of our lefts. Two cocks and a grey hen tumbled down like apples shaken from a tree, and a third went off in a sickly manner as if he had had too much. We picked them up, and waited for Duncan, who somehow seemed to be in no hurry. When he did come we found, however, he had the excuse in his hand in the shape of the wounded bird, which he had seen fall. As dusk was now gathering down, we held hard on for home-wards, taking what we could get on our way, but following nothing which went wide of us, and when we counted the slain at the lodge-door found $6\frac{1}{2}$ brace of grouse, five white hares, two brown hares, three grey hens, five blackcocks, and nine brace of partridges, as good a mixed bag as any man need care to make in Her Majesty's dominions.

THE LAUNCHING OF THE YACHT.



MARK ye how the banners wave !

Mallet blows are ringing,

Trolling out a merry stave,

Hark, the men are singing !

A lady fair stands by the bow,

A bottle hangs down from the prow ;

She wakes ! she lives ! she moves, and now

She's to the water springing !

Fleet, she races to the tide,

Neptune's youngest daughter ;

Like bridegroom who receives his bride,

See the sea has caught her.

Oh, what a comely maid is she !

This new-born daughter of the sea,

Riding there so gracefully,

On the glassy water.

She will sail when winds blow high,

Sail when spindrift's flowing ;

She will sail when winds but sigh,

And gentle breezes blowing.

My bonnie bride so trim and fast,

With sails sun-lit all glowing,

Long fly thy flag through storm and blast,

Fair ladies' hands are sewing.

